The Parting of the Ways

By THE RT. REV. F. W. PIGOTT, M.A. (Oxon)

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THE PARTING OF THE WAYS

TEACHINGS OF THE LIBERAL CATHOLIC CHURCH
COMPARED AND CONTRASTED WITH
TRADITIONAL CATHOLIC TEACHINGS

BY

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PREFACE

The papers included in this volume were written on a voyage from Australia to England for the comparatively few people who read **The Liberal Catholic** magazine. It is in the hope that they may reach a wider public that they are now issued in the form of a booklet.

To those outside the Liberal Catholic Church, into whose hands it is hoped that the book may find its way, it is necessary to say that in using the term "Liberal Catholics" the author was thinking solely of those who definitely belong to the organization known as the Liberal Catholic Church. He is aware that there are degrees and varieties of liberalism in religion and that the teaching outlined in this volume represents a variety of liberalism which, though open to all who are drawn to it, is not usually accepted, or even known, by Liberal Catholics outside the Liberal Catholic Church.

It may be urged against this teaching that it goes far beyond a liberal interpretation of the original Christian revelation; that it is, in fact, an entirely new revelation. Those who assent to the teaching will hardly be prepared to deny that it is at least new to this age; but neither will they wish that any apology should be made for the daring involved in presenting it to the Christian world; for those who assent to it are probably, like the author, profoundly convinced both that a new revelation is sorely needed at the present time and that this particular revelation is profoundly true.

The writer of these papers is only too well aware that the task of presenting such a revelation, complete in every detail, to the religious public is altogether beyond his powers; yet he hopes that the outline of the teachings sketched in this small volume may indicate the nature and the scope of that revelation to many to whom it is new, and lead those who can welcome it as true, so far as it goes, to the sources, outer and inner, whence it is derived.

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CHAPTER ONE—INTRODUCTORY.

LIBERALISM and Catholicism are strange companions.

A hundred, or even fifty years ago such a combination of ideas as those represented by these two terms would have been considered impossible. The two ideas have until modern times been regarded as fundamentally opposed to one another, as mutually exclusive and incommunicable. From time immemorial liberalism has been regarded by Catholicism as its inveterate foe, with which it could never come to terms; as something so entirely wrong and bad that it must be resisted at all costs; friendships must be broken and despite done to the tenderest human relationships rather than that Catholicism should have any dealings with liberalism. So deeply rooted in the older branches of the Catholic Church is this spirit of antagonism to liberalism that it is doubtful, humanly speaking, if it could now be exorcized or extracted without splitting the whole fabric of the Church into innumerable irreplaceable fragments.

And it is not difficult to understand this feeling of antagonism, or even, to a certain extent, to sympathize with it. It is easy to see that it is rooted in such beautiful qualities as reverence for the past, faithfulness to a sacred trust and, most beautiful of all, loyalty to what is genuinely believed by traditional Catholics to be the Will of God as revealed by Our Lord, and explained by the Holy Ghost. In so far as the antagonism is due to zeal for the Lord it will evoke the admiration and the sympathy of all people of goodwill, because of the zeal, though the same people may often doubt whether a zeal which shows itself in such violent antagonism may not be mistaken.

The Catholic religion, as theologically interpreted, is an intricate theory of life and a complex system of conduct; it is a vast, elaborate and beautifully symmetrical structure. The interdependence of one part on all other parts is so close that if any part is weakened, or in any way impaired, all the other parts are weakened with it, unless the theologians can patch it up with such skill that the flaw escapes detection. If, for instance, particular theories of Inspiration are abandoned, then the whole structure will be decidedly weakened, though not destroyed. If the science of literary criticism casts doubts on the historicity of certain episodes connected, say, with the birth or death of Our Lord, then the great fundamental doctrine of the Incarnation, as theologically interpreted, is gravely endangered. And so it is with all the parts of this vast theological structure.

It hangs together so perfectly that it can only be kept together by the most zealous vigilance on the part of its guardians, watching every portion of it lest by some "blast of vain doctrine" the structure should in any part be impaired. The structure was a thousand years, more or less, in the building; and for another thousand years or so it has been constantly under repair. Who can wonder, then, that it is guarded so zealously? Or who can fail to feel some compassion for those Fundamentalists, who, scenting danger for their structure in the writings of the Modernists, are preparing to use almost all those weapons of defence, short of bloodshed or physical torture, which so disgraced the Church in the days of the Inquisition?

This structure, this theological system, means everything to traditional Catholics and to Fundamentalists of the non-Catholic Churches. If it goes, everything goes—so they seem to feel. It is, or they seem to think it is, life itself to them. Who that has ever heard that deep, subdued sigh of utter distress, not to say horror, when some theory not quite in accord with the orthodox standard is hinted at, can doubt how intensely important this system is to many holy people, whether in the Catholic or Protestant Churches? Who that has once heard that sigh or moan of distress could wish deliberately to cause such pain? The danger is rather in the other direction, that genuine beliefs will be hidden or even denied by Liberals and Modernists, rather than that acute pain should be inflicted on friends and relatives, or on any sensitive souls leading blameless lives in the strength, so they suppose, supplied them by their belief in that system. The distress that is felt by such souls when, say, any doubt is cast on what have always been supposed to be the historical facts of the Gospel, is so obvious and so acute that conversation on such points will usually be avoided lest pain should be inflicted.

Now, liberalism, by welcoming new revelations of Truth from whatever quarter they may come, is continually threatening to undermine this great structure. The theologians with their repairing tools are continually at work restoring the structure when damaged by liberalism. With dexterous skill they have to dive down to the foundations and patch them up, or repair any fissures that may occur in the superstructure as best they may. The structure being so dear to its guardians, who can wonder that they dislike these constant threats to its stability? Who can wonder that traditional Catholics do not love liberalism?

It will thus be seen that, from the point of view of traditional Catholicism, liberalism's attitude to Truth and the revelation of Truth is wholly dangerous and mischievous. Liberalism regards Truth as a treasure to be won by striving; it

is a prize which will be revealed gradually and progressively as men are able to receive it and to bear it; it is man's business, therefore, to fit himself to receive it, and to make himself able to bear more and more of it; the more he strives to know the more of it will be revealed. But the revelation will come in God's way, through whatever channels and by means of whatever agents God may choose to use. The channels of Truth and the agents of Revelation are matters about which man may not dictate to God. Truth may be revealed in response to scientific research or philosophical enquiry, as well as in response to religious devotion. It may even happen on occasions that the much distrusted **Vox Populi** is used as a channel of revelation. So liberalism believes and teaches. It needs no Scriptural text to support its belief; but this attitude to the revelation of Truth is, nevertheless, in perfect accord with the principle underlying the words of Our Lord: "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth."

Orthodoxy or traditionalism, on the other hand, regards Truth as a treasure carefully wrapped up and entrusted long ago for safekeeping to the Catholic Church. In all its fulness Truth, or "the Faith," was "once delivered unto the saints," and it has been one of the proudest boasts of the Catholic Church since the earliest days that it is the sole guardian and interpreter of Truth. To this deposit "once delivered unto the saints" nothing can ever be added, and, so the Catholic Church seems to teach, nothing can ever be unfolded from it and delivered to the world as Truth without the approval of the Church; and no discovery of science, no teaching of philosophy, no alteration of a moral code or of marriage laws, in fact no new teaching of any description which is not in complete accord with the Faith as originally deposited in the Catholic Church, can escape the brand of "heresy" or "sin."

Nothing indeed can ever be added to Truth, for Truth stands for what is. On that point liberalism and traditionalism are in perfect agreement. But there is considerable disagreement as to whether all the Truth was ever delivered to the Saints, whether the Saints of any particular age could ever have understood all the Truth, and whether the Catholic Church is the only body to which the deposit has been entrusted, or the only body authorised to unfold the treasure.

The difference between these two attitudes is fundamental. It cannot be reconciled. But it does not follow that there is a fundamental and irreconcilable difference between liberalism and Catholicism. There is not. The true antithesis is not between liberalism and Catholicism, but between liberalism and traditionalism.

So long then as liberalism exists in the world, the great structure commonly known as the Catholic Faith, erected by traditional theology, is in danger; and the more active liberalism becomes the greater is the danger to this structure. Consequently, liberalism must be resisted to the uttermost. Traditional Catholics can never believe that liberalism might be the best friend of Catholicism; that it might be used as an agent of God to strip off from their structure accretions and additions which never really belonged to the original deposit; that liberalism might, if they would allow it, reveal beneath their structure another structure not made by theologians, but by God, and therefore indestructible; a structure, too, which is far more beautiful than anything hitherto perceived by them. Such an idea to them is unthinkable and even blasphemous, for, to their minds the theological structure is a true copy "of the pattern shown to them in the mount," made not by man but by God, and the only structure that God has made or, presumably, ever will make.

Such, then, being the attitude of traditional Catholics towards Truth, how is it possible for liberals ever to have a share in the Divine blessings which have undoubtedly been entrusted to the Catholic Church? It is not possible within the historic Church. So long as the traditionalists are in possession it is quite impossible for liberals to exist happily in the traditional Catholic Churches of Christendom. As lay people they may with care escape detection, and remain in, say, the Roman or Anglican Church all their lives, but they will feel very uncomfortable; and even priests of very liberal views may in the Anglican Church manage to keep their positions, but their lives cannot be always happy, as Catholics' lives should be; they must feel that they are not wanted, and must always know that they are suspected. It is very largely because of this irreconcilable difference between the liberal and traditional views on the all-important matter of Revelation that the Liberal Catholic Church under Divine guidance, so its members believe, came into existence. Had it been possible for the liberal spirit to find a home in the Roman Church, or in any other branch of the Catholic Church, the Liberal Catholic Church need not have arisen. But it was not possible. The dead hand of the past lies too heavily upon the older Churches to admit of such a wide expansion as that. The formation of the Liberal Catholic Church marks distinctly a parting of the ways.

The experience of the Modernist movement within the various parts of the Christian Church shows how necessary it is that there should be a new form, a new Church in which liberalism may live happily and express itself without friction. Modernism is seeking to oust traditionalism from its strong position as sole occupant

in the older Churches. It is doubtful if it can ever be done. Moreover, it is a question if it ought to be done, for, if it could be done, it would involve the loss of love; and that price would be too heavy. How plain it must be to any keen observer that the Christian graces do not and cannot flourish in an atmosphere of controversy. Where the Virgin Birth, the Empty Tomb, or the Divinity of the Lord are continually matters of keen discussion and hot debate the grace of graciousness withers and fades. It is only when people can separate themselves from this "strife of tongues" that they can touch reality and drink of "the well of water springing up into everlasting life." If Modernism continues to strive for a place within the older Churches, where traditionalism is firmly established, love will disappear from those Churches, and then, even though modernised, they will be "nothing worth." Modernism, which is in some respects synonymous with liberalism, can never exist side by side with traditionalism. It must either oust traditionalism from the historic Churches, or it must form new Churches for itself. The latter, though a very difficult matter and a very serious responsibility, is nevertheless preferable to the former course. It is, in fact, the inevitable course.

But a Church which is only liberal, or only modernist, could not exist for a year. Liberalism in itself is only a passive quality, not a vital force. It is an intellectual atmosphere in which some warm and active religious impulse may root itself and blossom, but it is not itself that impulse. Nor is Modernism in itself a religion, nor can it ever become so. It is much less constructive than destructive, and much more negative than positive. It is essentially and necessarily critical. That is its function, and though a necessary purgative element in the growth and progress of any body, it is in itself cold and uninviting. It is able to destroy, but as yet it has never shown itself able to reconstruct. It does not profess to do so. It tells us what the various clauses in the Creeds do not mean, but it is not able to say what they do mean. It is not mystical enough to be appealing, nor important enough to be arresting, nor spiritual enough to be compelling. In Modernism alone people are not likely to find anything to live by or to die for; at best they will find in it something intellectually interesting. But man does not live by intellect alone, any more than by bread alone. Neither a Modernist nor a Liberal Church alone could hope to attract more than a very few followers, and they would be almost entirely of the intellectual type. It could never hope to satisfy the mysticism which is so characteristic an element in the present-day religion, or to feed that **desiderium amoris** which always seeks to twine itself round some sacrament or outer manifestation of Divinity. Therefore, since the older

Churches were not and could not be liberal enough to contain it, and the "Modernist" movement was not Catholic enough to satisfy it, that blend of liberalism and Catholicism which is the hall-mark of so many of the Christians of this generation had to find for itself an entirely distinct and outwardly independent home. Such is the Liberal Catholic Church.

But the Liberal Catholic Church, though distinct from other parts of the Catholic Church, is not separate from that Church; it is related to it as a part to a whole, and as any other part to that whole. It is, therefore, not so much a new Church as a new part of the old Church. Similarly, it is only outwardly independent; its outer organization and constitution is entirely independent of any other Church, whether Orthodox Eastern, Roman, Anglican or Nonconformist; but inwardly it is dependent for its orders, the grace of its Sacraments, its authority and its charismata on the same Divine source as that from which all true branches of the Catholic Church derive their inner life and their life-giving powers. Believing that Catholicism is too divine, too beautiful, and too precious a thing to be limited to those only who hold the traditional view of revelation, the first group of Liberal Catholics, before the Liberal Catholic Church as such had been detached from the parent body, were careful to attach themselves to a body whose orders came through the direct line of descent which is usually and truly described as the Apostolic Succession; so they became a true part of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church throughout the world.

This union in a distinct Church of such seeming contraries as liberalism and Catholicism marks the parting of the ways. Liberalism claims to be Catholic. The supposed antithesis is denied. Liberalism is not essentially opposed to Catholicism, but only to traditionalism. Henceforth, liberals as well as traditionalists, may be Catholics, and Catholics may be liberal. People may think for themselves, and search for Truth for themselves, and yet be Catholics. And their search may be free and unimpeded. Free enquiry is not in any sense precluded when the conclusion is not in any way prescribed. It is a new departure in the history of Catholicism, a distinct parting of the ways; and a very necessary departure, for it needs no special prophetic gift to foresee that Christians of the future will be more and more of the liberal type, and less and less of the traditional type.

It now remains to be shown for what positive teaching exactly the Liberal Catholic Church stands, and wherein exactly its theology differs from that of the ancient historic Churches of Christendom.

CHAPTER TWO—THE DEPOSIT OF FAITH.

AN attempt was made in a previous article to show that the claim of liberal Christians to seek for Truth for themselves and yet remain Catholic is a new departure in the history of Catholicism. The traditional theory is that Truth as a whole has been entrusted for safe-keeping to the Catholic Church to be unfolded and distributed only when, and as that Church thinks fit. The liberal theory is that Truth is a prize to be won by hard striving, and that any who by hard striving will fit themselves to receive it will be led gradually and progressively "into all truth."

To hold the second view and yet be a Catholic is something so new in the world that the union of liberalism and Catholicism in the Liberal Catholic Church is in itself a very distinct parting of the ways.

It now remains to examine that "deposit of faith" rather closely, to discover what liberal Catholics for the most part make of it and where exactly their interpretation of it diverges from the well-trodden path of traditionalism. A distinct body like the Liberal Catholic Church must stand for something very definite in the world. It is not enough for a Church to be merely liberal; it is not enough that its members should be perfectly free to think for themselves and to seek for Truth in their own way. They must not only be free to do it but they must actively and positively do it, and as they discover fragments of Truth they must make known their discoveries to the world. They must be an **Ecclesia Discens.** Every Church, if it is to be of real value to the human race, must have its specific message for its own age and generation. The Liberal Catholic Church must have a definite message which is distinctively its own, even when it most emphasises the freedom of its members to think for themselves and to accept or reject that message as they choose.

Being liberal, it cannot lay down any doctrine or set of doctrines as **de fide,** nor can its Bishops make any **ex cathedra** pronouncements on matters of faith. But being a Church, distinct from other Churches, it must have its own distinctive teaching upon which its teachers are for the most part agreed; it must have an intelligent and intelligible answer to give to the question that is likely to be asked very frequently of its members in these early days—What do you stand for?

Thus, at the very outset of our effort to discover what exactly is the distinctive message of the Liberal Catholic Church to the world, we are brought face to face

with the old, old problem of freedom. The problem is too important to be ignored or shelved. It must be faced by any body of people, whether religious, political or social, seeking to establish freedom. How is freedom to be reconciled with discipline and order? That, in few words, is the problem as it confronts a free or liberal Church whether Catholic or otherwise. It is the same problem which confronts statesmen with regard to the government of nations, and the heads and managers of schools with regard to the training of children. If people are free how can there be order or discipline? The question implies, which is quite true, that people for the most part are not yet fit for freedom. But how can they ever become fit if no experiments are made and if they are never to be treated as though they were ready for the experiment? The old way of autocratic despotism, military law or Roman Catholic authority, is quite simple. Under those systems no risks are taken and no experiments are made. That way simply cuts the knot, but those who believe in liberty and call themselves liberal have to untie the knot without damaging the string. The solution of the problem is to be found in the rising flood of life, in evolution. When people become more highly developed and understand more of co-operation and mutual love and service they will instinctively order themselves, and will find their perfect freedom in the glad service of God and of their fellows. They will never then use their liberty for a cloak of maliciousness. Then there will be self-discipline, and when there is self-discipline no other form of discipline will be needed. So this, like all other perplexing problems of human life, will be solved by evolution; **solvetur ambulando.** Meanwhile risks must be taken, and that is the present condition in the Liberal Catholic Church.

The problem as it occurs in religious bodies is this—Are clergy and teachers to be allowed to teach exactly what they like? Must they, for instance, have liberty to teach those very doctrines which to liberals seem most cramping and even most damaging—the very teachings from which Liberal Catholics most rejoice to be free? Must liberty be stretched to such an extent? Apparently it must; there is no other way out. At all costs a Church must be true to its own theory, and to allow perfect liberty to the illiberal to teach illiberally is the price that a liberal Church must be prepared to pay, if needs be, for its own liberty. But we may hope that it will not be necessary for the Liberal Catholic Church to pay that price; we may hope that none who wish to confine themselves and others within narrow and cramping limits of thought will seek to be teachers in that Church. But that apparently is the only solution. The risk must be taken. And it is better to run such a risk than to fall into the old and illiberal method of formulating an orthodoxy of our own. A liberal

orthodoxy would indeed be a contradiction in terms, and an orthodox Liberal Catholic Church the laughing-stock of gods and men.

Disclaiming then any intention of forming a Liberal Catholic orthodoxy we may again approach the question—For what does the Liberal Catholic Church stand?

In the following chapter it is proposed to examine this question under headings, which will be familiar to students of theology and Church history, such as the doctrine of God, the doctrine of Christ, the doctrine of Man, the doctrine of Salvation, and so forth. An attempt will be made to discover to what extent we agree with the old traditional or "orthodox" teaching of the Church and at what points exactly we disagree. The point of divergence or parting of the ways, if it can be discovered, marks the point where the distinctive teaching of liberalism begins; it is also the point at which Liberal Catholics must expect to be branded as heretics by the older Catholics. That we must expect. If we were "orthodox" in all respects we should not have formed a distinct Church. There would have been no need for a distinct Church. But, being distinct, it is as well that we should know what is our special distinction or "heresy." The purpose then of this examination of doctrines is not to tell Liberal Church-people what they ought to believe but to show them what they probably do believe and wherein their beliefs are distinct or "heretical."

To discover what exactly is the teaching of the Christian Church as a whole on theological fundamentals is not difficult. The teaching of the undivided Church is summed up and expressed in the three Creeds or Symbols of faith commonly known as the Nicene Creed, the Apostles' Creed and the Athanasian Creed or **Quicunque Vult.** (The first words of the Athanasian Creed are **Quicunque vult salvus esse**—Whosoever wishes to be safe.) The date and authorship of these Symbols are matters which cannot be determined with accuracy; but the Symbols themselves may be taken as accurately representing the teaching of the Church of the first four General or Œcumenical Councils—the Councils of Nicaea (A.D. 325), Constantinople (A.D. 381), Ephesus (A.D. 431) and Chalcedon (A.D. 451). These three Creeds, which presuppose the existence of a definite revelation—"the deposit of faith"—are included in the liturgies of the Roman and Anglican Churches and they are accepted as statements of the Christian faith by most of the Nonconformist bodies. They are declared by the Church of England in her Articles of Religion to be provable "by most certain warrants of holy Scripture."

The teaching of the Church as a whole, then, may be said to be embodied and summed up in the three historic Creeds, but the interpretation of the Creeds and the beliefs of the various groups of Christians—the Churches – into which Christendom is now divided is an entirely different matter. The Roman Church seems to claim to be the only Church with authority to interpret. That body alone, so it seems to assert, can infallibly declare the Truth as it is contained in the Creeds. In its Tridentine decrees (1545-1563) it has interpreted, explained, developed and (so its opponents believe) added to and distorted the fundamental truths of Christianity as expressed in the three Creeds. The Church of England likewise has explained and interpreted the Faith in its thirty-nine Articles of Religion (1562); and the Presbyterian interpretation or expression is to be found in the Westminster Confession (XVIIth Century). And in addition to these expansions, developments or extensions of the Creeds, to be found in almost every separate or distinct Church in Christendom, still further expansions are to be found in the "schools of thought" which in any particular Church mark the different ways of interpreting the interpretations of that particular Church; and, further still, each separate teacher or preacher will have his own way of looking at a teaching which forms still another interpretation; and it is probable that almost each individual Christian, consciously or unconsciously, interprets the articles of belief in his own way, whether he is allowed this liberty of private interpretation by his own Church or not. So that the difficulty of discovering what exactly is the Christian point of view or teaching on any of the fundamentals of religion becomes more and more difficult as we get further and further from the age of the General Councils.

It is when we get a long way from the fountain-head and are lost in the maze of interpretations that we mostly find those crude teachings which the opponents or critics of the Christian religion persist in describing as the teaching of the Church as a whole. It is not a fair or even an intelligent method of criticism to judge a great religion by the teaching of its least intelligent exponents. The Christian doctrine of God, for instance, and of God's relationship to man is not to be found, as these critics assume, in the minds of simple peasants, nor in the ravings of Calvinistic preachers, nor even in the early narratives of the Hebrew Scriptures, but in the historic Creeds of Christendom. If this very unfair method of criticism could always be avoided both by Christians when estimating the value of other great religions, and by the teachers of other faiths when trying to understand Christianity, we should more quickly arrive at the truth of each other's positions and more easily and quickly discover the brotherhood of religions.

Liberal Christians of the present day therefore need not concern themselves with all the interpretations of all the Churches, least of all with those that are most crude. It is simply a waste of time to attempt to demolish such teachings as the verbal inspiration of Holy Scripture, original or inherited Sin, predestination, eternal punishment and many others. Destruction is the special work of Modernists, not of Liberal Catholics. Modernists understand their business and may be relied on to do it thoroughly. It is a question if even they would not be more profitably employed on some constructive work than in demolishing certain crude theories of God and His dealings with men which are already obsolescent and will soon, in the ordinary course of nature, be obsolete. Is it worth anyone's while to spend time on this class of work? The people who can hold these theories are not likely ever to be won to the teaching that they are likely to find in the Liberal Catholic Church, and, in any case, they are not likely to surrender their teaching before frontal attacks. If they are to be won at all they must be won by gentle persuasion and by the "sweet savour of a godly life" not by frontal attacks.

On the other hand there is much sublime teaching put forth by some of the best teachers of the orthodox Churches with which Liberal Catholics would do well to make themselves acquainted. This teaching and the doctrines of the whole Church as found in the historic Creeds, and not the mediæval interpretations or subsequent theories of interpretations, will be our first concern in the following papers. Our next concern will be to try to discover the inner meaning of the fundamental doctrines—the Creed within the Creeds; to go behind the Creeds to the **depositum fidei** presupposed in them, behind that again to the full content of that deposit and so perhaps to some **disciplina arcani** which we have known long since and lost awhile.

CHAPTER THREE THE DOCTRINE OF GOD.

ALL the interpretations and expositions of the Creeds that we find in all the Churches of Christendom are but the attempts of Christians of various ages to discover the inner meaning of the Christian Faith—the Creed within the Creeds. They all follow the same principle—the principle that nothing can ever be added to the truth proclaimed in the Creeds, but that the full meaning of those declarations of Truth may be drawn out from age to age as men are able to bear it. It is claimed for all articles of Religion, whether the Tridentine Decrees, the Thirty-nine Articles, the Westminster Confession or any other collection, that they add nothing to the Creeds, that they do but make explicit teachings always implicit within them. This is the principle of "development" generally recognised as legitimate. Following the same principle the Liberal Catholic Church must likewise proclaim its beliefs, its particular interpretations of those same great doctrines, but without asserting that its interpretations are **de fide** teachings "which except a man believe faithfully he cannot be safe." In so doing it may and almost certainly will be charged with heresy but it will be more concerned to discover Truth than to escape ecclesiastical censures, and it may be pardoned for believing that its heresies will prove to be the very truths for which all the world is seeking.

The Doctrine of God. On this hallowed ground liberals and traditionalists alike might well fear to tread. But so far as they do tread on such ground they go side by side and even hand in hand for a very long distance.

The teaching of the Church as found in the Creeds is first that there is One God (monotheism), and next that God is manifested as a Trinity. One substance (οὐσία), three hypostases or persons (ὑποστάσεις, πρόσωπα). The three persons are distinct, yet their Godhead "is all one." The substance (οὐσία) is not to be divided nor are the hypostases or persons to be confounded. Of these three hypostases "none is afore or after other, none is greater or less than another." "The whole three persons are co-eternal and co-equal."

That briefly is the Christian teaching about God—that and not, as is so often supposed by the uninstructed, that God is anthropomorphic (in human form) and anthropopassionate (with human passions).

Before these sublime teachings liberals and the most reverent traditionalists will surely bow and adore—and try to understand. The word Substance

(οὐσία) as adopted at Nicaea (A.D. 325) is important and exceedingly interesting. The English equivalent of the Greek is perhaps rather "essence" than "substance," and perhaps the ideas connoted by "be-ness" or "is-ness," if we had such words, would still more nearly convey to English-speakers the idea contained in the Greek word. That idea is that God alone IS; everything else "is not." Between He Who IS (ὁ ὤν) or That Which IS (τὸ ὄν) and that which is not (τό οὐκ ὄν) there is a great gulf fixed. Eternity then as opposed to created or derived existence (ἐξ οὐκ ὄντων) is the principal attribute of God in manifestation as found in the Christian definition. Of God alone it can be said "there never was a time when He was not" (οὐδέποτε ἦν ὅτε οὐκ ἦν.). Of all else there was a beginning in time; of everything else it may be said that there was a time when it was not (ἦν ὅτε οὐκ ἦν). In the discussions of the Fourth and Fifth Centuries about the Divinity of Our Lord the word οὐσία became the test word. This part of the subject belongs properly to the next chapter, but as it is so very important in Christian theology and as it has a distinct bearing on the main subject of this chapter it may be profitable to anticipate here what must be more fully expanded in the paper on Christology. The question at issue was:—"Was Christ Divine? Did He share the very being (οὐσία) of God or was He of like being (ὁμοιούσιος) but not of the very same being (ὁμοούσιος). Was there never a time when He was not? Or could it be said of Him 'there was a time when He was not' (ἦν ὅτε οὐκ ἦν)." That was the question. The Catholic or Athanasian party won the day at Nicaea. The Divinity of Christ was established, and ever since then that doctrine has been safely and securely preserved in the Christian Church inside that one word ὁμοούσιον which is translated in the English version of the Nicene Creed "of one substance" with the Father. And there it is likely to remain because it is a great Truth. The importance of this truth at the present time is such that the subject must have at least one chapter to itself.

The doctrine of One God in Trinity and Trinity in Unity is the official teaching of the whole Christian Church about God. And those, however liberal, who will examine clause by clause and word by word the statements of the Christian Creeds which define this primary doctrine (wherever possible using the Greek version of the Nicene and the Latin versions of the Athanasian and Apostles' Creeds), will probably be content, at the end of their study, to leave well alone. They will probably not wish to alter a single word, or a single syllable of it. (This of course does not apply to the "minatory" clauses of the Quicunque Vult which

are not part of the Creed proper and which certainly are not concerned with definitions of the Trinity). The words seem to have been so carefully chosen and are always the inevitable words, and the terms and phrases are so terse and yet so full, that we may dare to assert that behind the Nicene Doctors there was direct super-human guidance. It is doubtful if even the subtlety of the Orient could have improved on the Christian definition: but then the Orientals would probably not have attempted any definition of God.

When we pass from the exact words and phrases of the Christian symbols to the thoughts about the being of God as revealed in the writings and words of the most reverent exponents of Christianity to-day, Liberal Catholics will still find themselves side by side and hand in hand with their orthodox brethren for a considerable distance. The discrimination between God transcendent (the Absolute) and God immanent in the universe, is quite generally made in the Christian Churches to-day. The teaching of immanence has very strong scriptural support and it appeals to the heart and to the reason of countless people outside as well as inside the Christian Churches at the present time. God is conceived of as being immanent within each person, the spark at the apex of the soul that lighteth every man; and, further, He is within each thing and each atom. The omnipresence of God is the term usually used to convey this idea, and the recently discovered and frequently quoted saying (Λόγιον) of Jesus:—"Raise the stone and thou shalt find me, cleave the wood and I am there," combined with the words of Our Lord--"God is Spirit,"—affords all the support of the Divine authority that is needed.

So far, liberals will probably be quite at one with traditionalists but they will probably differ over a point which to many liberals seems to be a logical sequence from the idea of the Divine immanence, and to be a necessary corollary of the post-Copernican astronomy. In between God transcendent (the Absolute) and God immanent in any individual child of God, there must surely be other manifestations of God. The doctrine of the Trinity seems to be a philosophical necessity --a subject implying an object and a mutual connection between the two, a Lover implying a Beloved and Love binding the two together—and therefore it may be supposed to apply at every level conceivable (by man) or inconceivable. But the human being on this planet Earth hardly dares or aspires to approach to the level of the Absolute. It is not usually of the Absolute that he thinks when he expresses his belief in and directs his worship to One God in Trinity and Trinity in Unity. God, so far as he is concerned, is the God or Logos (Word) of the Solar System to which this planet belongs. Man's main business as man is to worship—and by so

doing to try to make his nature one with the nature of the God of this Solar System. This of course implies that there are other Logoi of other solar systems, an implication which to many even of the best and kindest of traditionalists will savour of polytheism and as such be a glaring heresy. However that may be, to the liberal who cannot divide himself into thought-tight compartments it seems a necessity. If he accepts (as he must) the Copernican idea of the Universe he must suppose that there is in charge of the evolution of each solar system a Being, Who though less than the Absolute, if we must think of greater and less at such a level, is nevertheless so great that He is to us God in the fullest sense of that mysterious word. To us beings of this planet Earth the Logos of our Solar System is God, and it is of Him that we think when in our Creeds we express our belief in the Trinity in Unity and Unity in Trinity. There is The One, no doubt, right at the back of all just as, apparently, all the Solar Systems which have existed, do exist or ever will exist form somewhere and somehow a single unit; but, after all, such matters are surely too high and too hard for most of us to exercise ourselves in at present. It is enough for us at present to look up to and pay our homage to the God or Logos of our Solar System; and it will need all our efforts for ages still to come to make ourselves completely one with Him.

Believing as we do in this inconceivable One behind and beyond the Many we are not really guilty of an ecclesiastical "heresy"; and our interpretation of the doctrine of the Transcendence and Immanence has at least as much right to a place in the Christian Church as any other; but because of a strange habit that many intellectual people, especially theologians, have of thinking in one way with one part of the mind and in another way with another - of accepting modern astronomy and yet holding to a theory of One God and Father of all which belonged to the pre-Copernican age, we are likely to be regarded as heretical on this point. Whether that be so or not, there can be little doubt that the teaching of a Solar Logos, so far as it may be described as a distinctive teaching of the Liberal Catholic Church, marks a parting of the ways on this point.

CHAPTER FOUR—THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST (1).

"WHAT think ye of Christ?" "Whom say ye that I am?" In one form or another that has proved, during the two thousand years that have elapsed since the Lord Christ is represented to have asked it, the most interesting, perhaps, of all theological questions, and the most difficult to answer. It is a question for which all clergy must always be prepared with an answer, and it is well that all communicants, whether they accept the official answer of the Christian Church or not, should know what answer has been given to the question by the Church. To state that answer as fully and adequately as such a subject deserves is impossible in so short a book; all that can be attempted within such a compass is to state briefly and as concisely as possible the results that were arrived at by the doctors of the Church in the IVth and Vth Centuries of our era—the age of definitions—and then to examine the doctrine in the light of present day presuppositions and modern psychology and try to find a satisfactory answer to the question that perplexes so many earnest minds at the present time, namely—Why, if true, does not the doctrine as stated by orthodox Christianity make a stronger appeal to the reason of modern thinkers?

Any attempt to explain the Catholic doctrine of the Person of Christ to modern readers who have had no special theological training is doomed to failure unless the theological background of the IVth and Vth Centuries is first made plain. The doctors of the Church of those days, who were responsible for formulating the Church's Christology, were for the most part Greeks, or at least men of Greek education yet, strangely, their idea of God was almost entirely Jewish. By that time the Church had taken over and adopted the Jewish idea of God and much else that was characteristically Jewish teaching, although by then the Church had almost entirely passed out of its Jewish nursery. The more characteristically Greek or Oriental ideas which had struggled for a place in the Church of the first three centuries, in various Gnostic sects and schools, had in the fourth century almost completely disappeared. This must be remembered by those people of the present day to whom the Gnostic and Oriental ideas of God are much more familiar than the Jewish and traditional Christian conceptions; otherwise they cannot hope to

(1) Perhaps the best work in English on this subject is R. L. Ottley's **The Doctrine of the Incarnation.**

form a clear idea of the various points at issue in the Christological controversies; it is necessary for any understanding of those controversies that they should be viewed against the Jewish background presupposed.

The Jewish idea of God was of the Almighty Creator existing from all eternity aloof and entirely distinct from all His creatures. Between God the Creator and even the highest of His creatures a great gulf was fixed—unfathomable and unpassable. God the Lord IS. Everything else is not. The Greek term for this isness, which is God, is Ousia (οὐσία) which is more or less equivalent to the English "substance" or "essence." The question which, more than any other in the IVth and Vth Centuries, exercised the best minds of the Christian teachers was on which side of that dividing line between the Creator and His Creation the Lord Christ was to be placed. Probably the wisest teachers shrank from making any definition of the Lord's nature; their reverence would restrain them from attempting anything so calculated to arouse that argumentative tendency to which the Greeks were particularly prone; but the circumstances of the time made definition almost imperative. They were continually being pressed to give an account of their beliefs, to state exactly what they thought. And in their teaching there appeared, as was inevitable, wide divergencies of opinion; some stressed one aspect of the Lord's nature and some another, till gradually there arose stormy controversies and the Church, to guard itself against identification with teachings which seemed to the majority of its bishops to be untrue, had to state what they did not believe and so to declare what they did believe. These positive statements of belief are found in the Catholic Creeds, and the teachings rejected are the great heresies of the early Church. So the definitions grew out of strife and controversy, a condition which, so long as the Greek mind with its love of intellectual problems and metaphysical subtleties predominated in the Church, was inevitable. Their purpose was rather to exclude error than to proclaim truth.

Arianism.—The first great heresy was connected with the teaching of a certain priest in Alexandria named Arius, a pupil of the famous Lucian, a teacher of Antioch, who suffered martyrdom in the Diocletian persecutions in A.D. 311. From this man the most heinous of all the heresies has derived its distinctive name "Arianism." Briefly his teaching was that though Christ could be called "divine" yet there was a time when He was not (ἦν ὅτε οὐκ ἦν) and so, when pressed to say on which side of the dividing line he placed Our Lord, he quite definitely placed Him on the side of the creatures. Arius would allow that He was of like

substance (ὁμοιούσιος) with God but not that He was of the same substance (ὁμοούσιος). If those readers who do not know Greek will examine those two Greek words carefully they will see that the only difference between them is that in the middle of the former the letter ι (iota) appears which is missing from the other. That is the famous iota around which all this great controversy raged. All about one letter! Yes, but that one letter made all the difference, and practically all Christians of more modern times and many other teachers, who might not care to call themselves Christians, are agreed that "had the Arian doctrine gained the victory it would in all probability have completely ruined Christianity." (1)

The controversy over Arius grew to such proportions that it alarmed the Emperor Constantine who, hoping by means of the Church to save the Empire, wanted above all things that there should be peace in the Church. The Emperor, imagining that it was merely a question of words which could be easily settled, called a General Council of the Church consisting of all the bishops within the Empire. The Council, over which the Emperor himself presided, met at Nicaea in the year 325 A.D., and condemned the Arian teaching almost unanimously. To give effect to their condemnation they adopted and adapted an already existing baptismal creed introducing into it the famous word ὁμοούσιος (of one substance), which from that moment has been the test word of orthodoxy on that point. This creed differs, though not essentially, from the later creed of the Council of Constantinople (381) though the latter is now usually described as **The Nicene Creed.** A fair translation of the original creed of Nicaea is as follows:—

We believe in One God, the Father Almighty,
Maker of all things both visible and invisible;
And in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Son of God,
begotten of the Father, and only-begotten—
that is from the essence of the Father—
God from God,

(1) T. Carlyle quoted by Froude in **Carlyle's Life in London.**

Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten not made,
being of one essence with the Father;
by whom all things were made,
both things in heaven and things on earth,
Who for us men and for our salvation came down and was made flesh,
Was made man, suffered and rose again the third day,
Ascended into heaven,
Cometh to judge quick and dead;
and in the Holy Spirit.

But those who say that

"There was once when He was not" and
"before He was begotten He was not" and
"He was made of things that were not,"

or maintain that the Son of God is of a different essence, or created, or subject to mortal change or alteration—these doth the Catholic and Apostolic Church anathematize. (1)

The English "only-begotten" does not so well express the meaning of the Greek μονογενής as "alone-begotten," that is to say begotten of one only and not from a pair. The Liberal Catholic Church alone amongst the Churches translates it "alone-born" and in so doing comes nearest to the meaning of the original and to the equivalent expression found in the **Quicunque Vult**—"The Son is of the Father alone, not made, nor created but begotten."

It will be noticed that in the Nicene definition the Lord Jesus Christ and the Son of God are identified and the Son of God is plainly intended to refer to the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity. We must return to this point at a later stage; meanwhile the other General Councils and the heresies condemned by them must be considered. The Nicaean verdict was quickly won, but for more than fifty years after the Council had met the controversy continued to rage and the fate of that momentous decision hung in the balance. Owing mainly to the influence of the great orthodox teacher Athanasius the Nicaean formula was eventually

(1) Quoted from H. M. Gwatkin—**The Arian Controversy**—p.: 29.

established as the official teaching of the Church, and many of the terms descriptive of Our Lord's divine nature, so familiar to students of Christian theology, are due to the subtle mind of Athanasius. The English does not adequately reproduce the exact shade of meaning of the Greek, nevertheless even in the English the subtlety of thought can be detected. Christ for instance was described as "full God" (πλήρης θεός); "Offspring, yet not as one among things made" (γέννημα ἀλλ' οὐχ ὡς ἓν τῶν γεγεννημένων); the Son is "without birth" (ἀγέννητος), "ever begotten" (ἀειγενής) or "unbegotten-begotten" (ἀγεννητογενής).

Apollinarianism.—Then came a reaction. The pendulum swung to the other extreme. Some of those who, in opposition to Arianism, vigorously and earnestly contended for the divinity of Christ, used words which certainly implied a denial of His true humanity. One of the most zealous of these, and perhaps the ablest, was a certain Apollinarius, bishop of Laodicea, who in his eagerness to combat Arianism was led to deny the existence of a human will or reason (νοῦς) in Christ's human nature, this being replaced by the infallible reason of the Word or Son of God. The orthodox contention was that Christ assumed human nature in its entirety, including the νοῦς or "reasonable soul," for only so could He be example and redeemer. The teaching of Apollinarius and his followers was condemned at the Council of Constantinople (381) as definitely as the teaching of Arius had been rejected at Nicaea, but Apollinarianism lingered on for long after its formal condemnation and has constantly recurred throughout the subsequent centuries. Its most important recurrence was in the heresy known as Monophysitism (one nature) which flourished in the fifth and sixth centuries. At the present time when the most orthodox of Catholic teachers are at times led rashly to accuse other teachers of denying the divinity of the Lord, the retort naturally, and sometimes actually, is that they (the orthodox) are identifying themselves with the heresy of Apollinarius—denying that Christ was **verus homo.** So difficult was it to tread the razor's edge of orthodoxy, to affirm the divinity without denying the humanity and vice-versa, when God is thought of as quite distinct from and wholly other than man.

Nestorianism.—(1) Again the pendulum swung in the direction of Arianism. There was at Antioch a school or group of influential theologians, already referred to, who, following the tradition of their master Lucian, were particularly zealous

(1) An excellent work on this part of the subject is J. F. Bethune Baker's **Nestorius and his Teaching.**

for the reality of the manhood of Christ. They were naturally strongly and even vehemently opposed to the teaching of the Apollinarians and, just as the Apollinarian heresy arose from excessive anti-Arian zeal, so Nestorianism was a result of, and a reaction from, excessive zeal in the condemnation of Apollinarianism and the general tendency of the Alexandrian school. The historical rivalry between the two schools of Antioch and Alexandria also added fuel to this very heated controversy. Cyril, that very bitter arch-hunter of heretics, happened at the time to be Archbishop of Alexandria and he, with his usual keen scent for heresies, detected some false teaching in the refusal of Nestorius, bishop of Constantinople, to apply the term "mother of God" (Θεοτόκος) to the Blessed Virgin Mary. The term had come to be used without implying any denial of the perfect manhood of the Lord; its use was strictly in accordance with the generally allowed process of thought and speech by which the terms appropriate to one Person of the Blessed Trinity or to one of the natures in the Person of Christ were transferred to another. The terms were by general consent inter-changeable. This process was known as the **communicatio idiomatum.** But Nestorius, or rather his chaplain Anastasius, forbade its use and from that moment one of the fiercest and most disgraceful of all the controversies of the Christian Church arose.

The followers of Nestorius claimed that by the use of the term "Mother" or "Bearer of God" the human nature of our Lord was denied. Cyril and his followers retorted that by refusing the title the Nestorians taught two Christs, two persons—one Divine and the other human. Another Council was held, this time at Ephesus, in the year 431. Nestorius was emphatically condemned and the use of the term "Bearer of God" was made obligatory on all teachers of the Church. Cyril as usual won the day, but because of the bitterness of his too zealous defence of the faith the Church has reason to be ashamed rather than proud of this great champion of orthodoxy.

Nestorianism is an elusive heresy. It is difficult to discover exactly what it was since its emphasis seems to have been so frequently shifted. But broadly speaking it came to this: was the Lord Christ to be regarded as from eternity Son of God or as one who gradually became God, rather in the Hellenic sense of a deified man? No doubt Nestorius was entirely free from any intention of denying the eternal Divinity, nor in fact did he ever, like Arius, actually deny it; recent research seems even to exonerate him from any complicity whatever in the teaching which has been called by his name. His difficulty was entirely a difficulty of

terms. But if his objection to the use of the word "Bearer of God" had been allowed it would have opened the door to the teaching which the Church all along had been anxious to exclude—the teaching of the deification as opposed to the eternal Sonship of the Lord.

Once more the whole difficulty was due ultimately to the Jewish idea of God presupposed. Nestorians and Catholics alike are trying to build on a false basis.

Eutychianism.—Then again there followed the inevitable reaction. Eutyches, an old monk of Constantinople and a keen supporter of Cyril, overbalanced in his eagerness to stress the unity of person in the Lord Christ. He admitted that generally Godhead and manhood were entirely distinct but that in the particular Person of the Lord the manhood was swallowed up or absorbed in the Godhead. The simile usually attributed to him is that the manhood became to the Godhead as a drop of vinegar in the ocean. This again was perhaps not so much a denial of the two natures in the one Person as an opening of the door to the possibility of such a denial. He was not very far from a profound truth and would have been still nearer to that truth if, retaining the simile attributed to him of the drop in the ocean, he had insisted that though the manhood was thus merged in the Godhead it did not cease to be true manhood; that the "taking of the manhood into God" involved also the coming of the Godhead into complete possession of the manhood. The drop falls into the ocean and simultaneously the ocean pours its fulness into the drop – an impossibility physically, but a fact at a very exalted spiritual level. It cannot, however, be claimed for Eutyches that he used the simile in that sense, and, without that qualification, his teaching did seem to invite denials of the Lord's true manhood.

Against Eutyches the great Leo, bishop of Rome, threw all the weight of his learning and influence, and at the Council of Chalcedon in 451 the last of the great definitions was formulated. It was affirmed that Christ is one Person with two natures—one, divine from all eternity, the other, human and voluntarily assumed at birth. The Chalcedonian definitions cannot be better expressed than in the words of the **Quicunque Vult,** commonly known as the Athanasian Creed: "God of the substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds: and Man of the substance of His Mother, born in the world—Who although He be God and Man yet He is not two, but one Christ."

This was the last of the definitions. A century later in opposition to the Monophysite (one nature) and Monothelite (one will) tendencies of thought it was found necessary to affirm the Chalcedonian definition, but that was a reaffirmation and not a new definition.

The result of the four Councils may perhaps be fairly summed up thus:—Christ was declared to be

Perfect God and Perfect Man

as opposed respectively to Arianism and Apollinarianism, and

One Person—two natures

as opposed to Nestorianism and Eutychianism.

The question now, in view of these definitions, is "What think ye (Liberal Catholics) of Christ?" "Who say ye that He is?"

A modern Churchman has said that the Chalcedonian formula marks the bankruptcy of Greek philosophy. Is that a true estimate of the result of all the mental and spiritual exercises involved in arriving at the final Chalcedonian conclusion?

It is true if the two natures are thought of as somehow in juxtaposition, which would indeed be a very unphilosophical proposition; but plainly the Chalcedonian doctors thought of them not as in juxtaposition but as related as higher to lower. And it is perhaps true in the sense that the attempt to fit Greek philosophy on to a Jewish idea was impossible. The Greeks were naturally philosophical; the Jews were not. And so it was a misfit, but in no other sense is the indictment true. Eliminate from the Christian Creed the Jewish idea presupposed but not stated, and substitute a more philosophical idea of God and it becomes evident that within and behind the definitions are profound truths which Liberal Catholics for the most part will not be likely to deny. The main truth is greater than either the Catholics of the time saw or the traditional Catholics of the present day will allow. The early theologians builded better than they knew. Their Christology was perfectly true but it was not the whole truth; so far as it went it was a magnificent exposition in philosophical terms of a profound truth, but it was only half the truth. They could go no further because of the Jewish background; but we of the XXth Century by removing that background and substituting some more gracious Divinity for the Jewish Jehovah can complete the unfinished work of the

Greek theologians and state the truth in all its fulness and splendour. The other half of the truth is the divinity of all mankind collectively and of each individual particularly. The IVth Century established the doctrine of the Divinity of Christ; the XXth Century promises to establish the doctrine of the divinity of all men; but at present this excess of orthodoxy is regarded by the older Catholic Churches as dangerous and mischievous, if not actually heretical, for in it is scented a danger to that half of the truth (to them the whole truth) which they have proclaimed so consistently and defended so vigorously throughout the Christian ages. It is in the affirmation of the divinity of mankind and not in any denial of Christ's divinity that Liberal Catholics may expect to be regarded as unsound by their Traditionalist brethren. That is the parting of the ways, and a point which will need some close examination in another chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE—THE DOCTRINE OF MAN.

IF it be asked for what especially the Liberal Catholic Church stands, it can be answered unhesitatingly that doctrinally it stands for the doctrine of the divinity of humanity. There is nothing new in this teaching of the oneness of God and man. It is quite familiar teaching to all who have made any study of Eastern religions and philosophies. It is also quite commonly believed by many Christians outside the Churches and by not a few within them, but it is not the official teaching of the Catholic Church. The Church has never attempted to define the nature of man as it has defined the nature of Christ and the Three in One in the Godhead, unless it be claimed as a negative definition that by accepting or presupposing the Jewish idea of God, with its sharp distinction between Godhead and manhood, the Church excluded the teaching that all are divine. It is a moot point. But though the teaching is not new it is certainly a very new thing in the history of Catholic Christianity that a true branch of the Catholic Church should not merely allow but encourage and even take for granted a teaching hitherto confined to the East, a teaching which can best be summed up in the words of an Eastern Scripture—"Never did I not exist, nor you, nor these rulers of men; nor will any of us hereafter cease to be." (Bhavagad Gita.)

The teaching of the immanence of divinity has always been allowed in the Church and never was such teaching more beautifully drawn than by some of the mystical teachers of the present day. But immanence is a very different teaching from identity. The best thinkers and teachers in the Church of all ages speak frequently of God or Christ or the Holy Spirit as immanent in man. He dwells in us, reigns in us, tabernacles among us, is the "light that lighteth every man," and, following St. Paul, the human body is referred to as the temple of the Holy Ghost. But theologians, even of such liberal Churches as the Anglican Broad Church party and the Congregationalists, rarely if ever identify the innermost in man with God. That is the special distinction of the teaching of the Liberal Catholic Church. At that point Liberal Catholics part company with even the most liberal thinkers and teachers of any of the older Churches of Catholic Christendom. For in the older Catholic Churches, in the Roman and High Anglican Churches especially, there is an idea deeply rooted that if all men are divine then Christ must somehow be less divine than if He alone of mankind is divine in origin. Whether or no such a contention is supported by any high ecclesiastical

authority is a disputable question, but the idea is certainly so deeply rooted that there is no chance at present of any body of people, holding the view that all men are divine, being recognized as Catholic, still less as orthodox, by the Traditionalists.

Yet to Liberal Catholics that teaching is so much the key to the whole situation that without it there seems to be little hope of the great Catholic religion making any effectual appeal to the highest intelligence of the present and succeeding generations. It seems to Liberal Catholics to contain the answer to the great question—the whence, the how and the whither of mankind. It is the lost word, the lost half of the great truth, for want of which man stumbles and fights in his progress, and in the light of which alone he can hope to realize his brotherhood with all men and escape from the delusion of separateness. It is, therefore, the function of the Liberal Catholic Church to proclaim this truth, and not only to proclaim it but to proclaim it boldly and even aggressively as a Catholic teaching, as implied and involved in the conciliar definitions of the doctrine of Christ; to proclaim that people, therefore, not only may, but should hold such a teaching about mankind and remain in the Catholic Church—sharers with the Traditionalists in all its benefits, partakers of all its treasures.

What, then, is this teaching, stated in terms of the conciliar definitions? It is that God and man are One. It is not necessary to define God beyond the conciliar definition that He is One in Three and Three in One and beyond saying that the God whom we mean is the God whom the Lord Christ revealed and described as the Father—not the Jewish Jehovah but the God or Logos of the System and ultimately the Absolute One. As opposed to the Arians we wholeheartedly believe that Christ and all men are "of one substance with the Father," not in the popular Hellenic sense that man may attain to divinity or be deified, or in the sense in which the Greek theologians sometimes speak of Christians, in Christ, being made God (θεοποιεῖσθαι) but in the sense in which Athanasius and his followers declared that Christ was "of one substance with the Father." Of Christ and of the real self of every man, of the **ego ipse**, it can be said "there never was a time when he was not." That self, that spark, which is the divine-in-man, inhering in the Christos, the Son of God, the second Person of the Blessed Trinity, has, in the Son, issued from the Father or been "begotten of the Father before all æons" in time; but from eternity that spark has existed, with the Son, in the bosom of the Father. It never was not.

With the Catholics as opposed to the Apollinarians we can say of Christ and of every man that he was "true" or "perfect man" (**verus homo**) with a human

body, feelings and mind, "of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting." Of every man as of Christ it can be said, as opposed to the Nestorians, that he is in his innermost self "Son of God" from eternity to eternity, and that therefore, every mother may truly be described as "bearer of God" (Θεοτόκος) inasmuch as she is the bearer of a body which is to be used for the time being by one whose innermost self is divine, however much obscured that innermost self may be. And, as opposed to the Eutychians, the Monophysites and Monothelites, we can say that in Christ and in every person are two natures—a higher and a lower—the higher being divine and the lower human; that in the Lord Christ the lower was and is completely in accord with the higher so that He knew no sin, but that in others the lower is to some extent out of accord with the higher, hence the continual strife between the flesh and the spirit, which, until the condition of complete accord is reached, are "contrary the one to the other." But whether the two natures are in accord, as in the Lord Christ, or out of accord, as in ourselves, they are as the Catholic teaching maintains, two natures and two wills, not, as the Eutychians, Monophysites and Monothelites taught, one nature and one will.

What, then, on this theory, is the difference between Our Lord and ourselves and mankind in general? The answer has been hinted at above in considering the Catholic or orthodox, as opposed to the Eutychian or heretical, teaching of the two natures, but the question is so very important and fundamental that the answer must be more fully expanded. So far as the Godhead is concerned there is no difference. There is only one God. The God Who was incarnate in Christ is also incarnate in all mankind. We, like Christ, are "equal to the Father as touching the Godhead." But so far as the manhood is concerned there is a very vast difference. In all the ages, hundreds of thousands or perhaps even millions of years, that mankind has existed on this and possibly on other planets, the Lord Christ has made perfect His manhood. He has lifted it into the Godhead where it ever remains as perfect manhood. He has realized His true nature, His essential divinity, "by taking of the Manhood into God." We have not done so; some of us have not nearly done so. He is conscious of that oneness as we are not. Therefore, speaking of the Lord Christ as incarnate in Palestine and present at every Catholic Eucharist, we can say of Him that He was truly God the Son, because of His consciousness, as man, of that oneness. For the same reason He could say, as we as yet cannot, "I and the Father are one thing"

(ἓν). We also are one with the Father, but, as incarnate human beings, not yet consciously so.

That is the difference, and a very great difference it is. In all those prehistoric ages, in life after life—for the Orientals are undoubtedly right in their teaching of successive incarnations—He has gone through all our experiences, yes, even sin. There is no experience known to us that He has not, in far past ages, also known. Experiences of old age as of young manhood, youth and childhood; experiences of domestic and family life as of the celibate condition; experiences in female as in male incarnations, in all races and classes, He has known them all. And so He is very really and truly human; in very truth our brother "tempted like as we are" yet, so far as the Palestinian manifestation is concerned, quite "without sin." Long before that incarnation He had reached a level of evolution at which sin is impossible. The human will, long before then, had become so completely one with the Divine will that He could not will to sin and so He could not sin; for sin is, after all and in the last analysis, caused by a want of accord between the human and divine wills, and when this want of accord is transcended and the possibility of it passed, then sin is impossible.

So also in that His last earthly manifestation He was free from ignorance. Those Catholics who stumble at the teaching, claimed by its exponents as orthodox, of the "emptying" (κένωσις) of divine knowledge before the incarnation of Our Lord are right to pause before they accept such teaching as true. There was no ignorance in Him then, however much such teaching may seem to be supported by holy scripture. Long before then He had taken the manhood into God, and the taking of the manhood into God involved the coming of the Godhead into the manhood. There was nothing concerning us men and our evolution, nothing of the plan of God, so far as that plan is concerned with the evolution of life within our solar system, that He did not know; beyond that it does not concern us to know or even to guess what He knew. It can be truly said that as in the Palestinian incarnation He was without sin, so also He was without ignorance. The kenotic Christ, as taught by some leading Anglicans, is too reduced to be convincing or inspiring. Such a Christ could not throughout the ages have towered high above all others.

The Lord's purpose in coming to us two thousand years ago was, on this theory as on the traditionalist theory, to help us to climb to the height at which He is, to save us from the sins which hinder our evolution and delay our upward progress "to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." He, as man, is consciously God. We, in our innermost natures, are God, but, as men, are

not conscious of our divinity. His human nature is so completely subdued to the divine nature that there is now no gulf between the two. His humanity, though divine humanity, is still humanity. We as men, that is in our lower natures, are not conscious of our divinity because those lower natures are not yet subdued to, and in accord with, the higher natures. Not yet are all things in subjection to the divine-in-us. We are capable of becoming what we are, capable of bringing the lower into complete accord with the higher and of becoming consciously divine; such is the divine will and the divine plan for all men, but not yet; and Christ's mission two thousand years ago was to help us to become what God has willed that we shall become, to help us to become what He has already become—human beings who are consciously divine, super-human beings. His mission is so to help us that our human natures may become one with His nature and so one with the Father, and to be one with the Father is to be perfectly natural and perfectly human. That is what is meant by the expression "coming to God through Christ." How He helps us to rise to that height belongs to the doctrine of Salvation rather than to the doctrine of Man and must be considered in another chapter.

Those who claim thus to interpret the Catholic religion in terms of Eastern psychology must expect to be asked by what authority they do this thing and who gave them their authority. It is a reasonable request and the answer is also reasonable though it is not likely to satisfy those who demand that all teachings must be capable of proof by "most certain warrants of holy scripture." The answer is that the outer authority on which Liberal Catholicism relies is not likely to be regarded as sufficient authority by more than a comparatively few people who will discover it for themselves, but that the real authority for this as for every proposition is not outer but inner; it is the authority of the spirit of truth within man, and it is on the authority of that spirit that Liberal Catholics must mainly rely to justify their special teaching to the world. They must proclaim their teachings in the confident hope that the spirit of truth within enquiring man will, more and more, set to its seal that those teachings are true. That after all is the highest and best and the only satisfactory authority that anyone can either demand or find for any teaching. If a teaching is true its own truth will eventually prove it, and if it is not true no amount of scriptural proof can ever make it true. So the truth of our teaching will before long prove it. It will commend itself by the light that it casts on many otherwise dark problems of life. Yet those who by constant thinking in terms of the divinity of mankind and of man's evolution through successive incarnations to the measure of the stature of Christ's fulness, those

who make themselves familiar with the teaching of panentheism, as such teaching may be called if a label is needed, and then turn again to the Hebrew and Christian scriptures, reading them afresh in this light, will be surprised to find how much support the teaching gets from that quarter. But it is not the way of Liberals to rely on scriptural texts, or quotations from the patristic writings, for proof of their beliefs. The only test for them is—does the teaching ring true? Does it cast light on the difficult problems of life? Does its own truth prove it? Is it in itself inherently probable?

And now at last we may turn to the question—Why, if true, does not the Christian religion as theologically explained whether by Catholics or by Protestants, make a stronger appeal to enquiring man? May it not be because that teaching is always based on Jewish conceptions which do not seem to square with post-Copernican science? From first to last, from the Fall to the final Redemption, theology always has in the background presuppositions which are too local, too small, too narrow, too Jewish to be convincing. The traditional teaching carries no weight because it does not tell man what he wants to know, but something else in which he is not interested. Somewhere, he believes, there is an infallible teaching, a divine plan of evolution, an explanation of the great riddle of life, and it is that plan that enquiring man seeks to discover, or at least that a corner of the veil that hides it shall be lifted. But the theologians only tell him of an estrangement between himself and God which he does not believe, of propitiation and blood-sacrifice which he cannot understand, and of an atonement in which he is not interested. It is all too Jewish. It is not enough for man's needs.

Even the Lord Christ, as theologically explained, is not enough. That explanation releases no amazement, no awe, no adoration. To explain Him by stating that He is God or Son of God cannot satisfy, even when the statement is supported and more fully explained by the conciliar definitions. For either, on that explanation, He is so de-humanized as to seem to be of little use as example or as Redeemer, or the difference between Him and the rest of mankind is not apparent, according as whether the Jewish or the Eastern idea of God is predominant in the minds of the enquirers. If the Jewish, then Christ seems to be altogether removed from man, for however much it may be stated that He was perfect man as well as perfect God, it is almost impossible for any but specially constructed minds to understand how a Being can be both God (in the Jewish sense) and man. The two ideas are mutually exclusive. Or, if the Eastern idea predominates, then, without the correlative idea of evolution by re-births, it is difficult to see that

more is said of Christ when it is stated that He is Son of God than can be said of every man. Even when it is declared that He is God the Son, the Second Person in the Blessed Trinity, no more seems to be said of Him than can be said in some degree of any other person, for it is obvious that the cosmic functions of the second Person of the Trinity were not suspended during the time that Christ was incarnate, and therefore that incarnation could only have been a partial manifestation of God the Son. If it is not explained in what degree He more fully manifested the life and consciousness of God the Son than other people, it is not a satisfactory explanation of His greatness to say that He was the second Person in the Blessed Trinity.

Man looks for something else, for some better thing than the Churches give him, and he seems to be disappointed in, though not always resentful towards, the Churches because they do not give him what he seeks. Theological Christianity makes so little appeal because it does not dig deep enough. What it says may be true but the truth is deeper and grander than the theologians perceive. And so enquiring man is, in the presence of the theologians, as a deaf man who stoppeth his ears, "which refuseth to hear the voice" of the theologians, "charm they never so wisely."

It may perhaps be the proud distinction of the Liberal Catholic Church that it has been sent into the world to reveal some part of that deeper teaching which the enquiring mind of man seeks. It may also in time be its function to say more and more, as men are "able to hear it," about the great Teachers of Whose existence the Churches of Christendom are at present completely unaware.

CHAPTER SIX THE DOCTRINE OF ATONEMENT.

(a) Traditionalist.

THERE is some reason for believing that the teaching (Oriental rather than Semitic) of the divinity of all men and of man's continual progress or evolution through countless ages of time from the One to the One, had its place in the Christian teaching in the first few centuries of our era. It was the teaching promulgated by some of the Gnostic teachers though, unfortunately, except here and there in the writings of Origen and, to a less extent, of Clement of Alexandria, little of this teaching has survived in documentary form.

In Alexandria in those days there was a regular welter of teachings, philosophies, theologies, and theosophies, and in this welter were many types or brands of Gnosticism so-called. Some of these Gnostics were very extravagant in their teaching of the nature and function of angels; there is in the epistle to the Colossians a distinct reference to this kind of teaching which is there strongly opposed. Others were extravagant to the point of wildness in their ideas of the nature of matter, which they regarded as essentially evil. The result of this teaching about matter was that the followers of the teaching either went to extremes of asceticism, hoping in this way to escape from contact with that which was, and always must be, essentially and incurably evil; or, in other cases, they went to the opposite extreme of license, holding that the pure spirit of man was so essentially divine that it could never have any contact with a thing so evil as matter, and that therefore the spirit remained untouched and uncorrupted and altogether unaffected however degraded the material body might become. The Catholics rightly rejected teachings which, however unintentionally, led to such disastrous results. But, unfortunately though perhaps naturally in such a welter, they lacked discrimination and in their zeal to eliminate the Gnosis or Scientia "falsely so-called" they covered up or drove under the true Gnosis, for want of which the Church has suffered ever since, and never more than at the present time. The Gnostics truly so-called seem to have had the light of the true knowledge, the deeper teaching already referred to, and, when expelled from the Church, the Gnostic tradition seems to have been handed on, somewhat furtively because of persecutions, from generation to generation in such sects as the Albigenses, Knights Templars, Rosicrucians and others. They were generally persecuted by the

Catholics but, even in the days of bitterest persecution, the light was never finally extinguished throughout the dark and the middle ages. Much of the Gnosis was also embodied in the noble Neo-platonic philosophy of Plotinus (3rd century) and his successors Porphyry, Iamblichus and Proclus and was handed on through Dionysius and S. Thomas Aquinas to the Christian Mystics. Even in the Church itself, there have usually been some teachers in every generation who have known the esoteric teaching, but their voices have rarely been heard above the din of those theological controversies from which the Church since its first beginnings has never been entirely free. It is, perhaps in the providence of God, one of the functions of the Liberal Catholic Church to recover the lost Gnosis, and to establish it in its rightful place as true teaching and, therefore, essential to the Catholic religion—the original **depositum,** perhaps; the Creed within the Creeds and the Gospel within the Gospels.

Never is the need for the rescue of the glorious Catholic religion from its Jewish fetters and the recovery of a larger view of God more plainly seen than when we contemplate the desperate efforts of theologians throughout the centuries to square both the beautiful Christian teaching of the loving Father and the splendour of the divine Master with the essentially Jewish ideas of the Fall, the wrath of God, original sin, blood sacrifice, propitiation and atonement. Some of the more mystical efforts have been beautiful and spiritual, but others of the legalistic type have been of such a character as to bring the blush of shame to the cheeks of most Christians of the present day; but, however refined, scholarly and spiritual the suggested theories may be, they seem rather to spoil the Christian deposit and very greatly to narrow and localize it; and when once Christianity can be viewed in a true perspective as a great esoteric world religion, detached from, and altogether larger than, its Jewish setting, all the efforts of theologians to Christianize the Jewish idea of atonement are seen to be wholly unnecessary.

It is not really necessary to suppose that Our Lord intended His religion to be a medium for the broadcasting of Judaism throughout the world; nor need we think it necessary not only that every Christian doctrine should be "according to the scriptures" but that every Jewish conception, however narrow or even gross, must be incorporated in the Christian Faith "that the Scriptures may be fulfilled." Why this tyranny of the written word? Oh, the pity of it—that the beautiful light of truth, which is the heart of Christianity, should have been for so many centuries, not extinguished, for that can never be, but hidden and obscured by veils of Jewish theologies!

It is probably at this point, where the doctrine of the Atonement comes into the Catholic Faith, that most Liberal Catholics will find that their views differ most widely from those of Traditionalist Catholics. But the difference on this point is from one point of view of less moment than almost any other doctrinal difference, because on the subject of the Atonement there is no official Church teaching and therefore no orthodoxy. In the Nicene Creed it is stated that "for us men and for our salvation" the Son of God "came down from heaven and was incarnate," but how man's salvation has been effected or from what exactly he needs to be saved, the Church as such, has never defined. Many Churchmen, including some of its most illustrious saints and scholars, have from age to age propounded theories of Atonement, but the Church as such has never committed itself to any particular theory but only to the fact. Therefore, short of a direct denial of the fact, heresy on such a point is hardly possible unless it be by implication. The Fall and its Reversal are like two poles around the connecting axis of which almost all the theology of the Christian Church revolves; all the points are theologically so closely linked together that a modern Cyril, with his prototype's keen scent for a heresy, might detect, lurking in some unusual teaching of Atonement, a heresy on another point which might seem to be wholly unconnected with it; for instance, in any view the Atonement is founded on the Incarnation and thus an unusual teaching on the Atonement, though in itself blameless, might be attacked as a heresy on the ground that it involved heretical views on the Incarnation. But in itself, any theory of the Atonement is ecclesiastically blameless, though it may be, as some theories actually have been, morally wrong, blasphemous and intellectually impossible.

The doctrine of the Atonement has a long history. It can be traced in the Scriptures, Christian and Hebrew, far back almost to the beginnings of Hebrew thought. It is bound up with the doctrine of the Fall of Man. It starts from the teaching that by a deliberate act of disobedience to a divine prohibition Adam and Eve "fell" from a condition of innocence. As a result of the Fall all the descendants of Adam and Eve—that is to say all human beings—have ever since been tainted with sin; for it must be remembered that until comparatively modern times the human race was thought of as springing from a single pair of progenitors. The entail, so the orthodox teaching runs, has been transmitted from the progenitors of the race through all intervening ages to the present day, so that all human beings throughout the world's history have been "born in sin," estranged from God and subjected to His wrath.

No extended attention need be given here to the material idea of Hell as a place of punishment for sinners, whether original or actual, current to this day amongst simple and primitive Christians in common with simple people of many other religions. This idea is now practically obsolete amongst the cultured classes in the Churches, and though it still lingers in a certain type of Roman Church and in Nonconformist bodies of the Calvinistic variety it is rarely mentioned in the pulpits of those Churches where preachers and congregations are educated. And in the best modern theological works, even of theologians considered to be strictly orthodox, the ideas connected with the terms Hell and Satan are rarely mentioned.

Nor need we consider such a very extravagant view of the effects of the Fall as that which at one time found expression in the saying that "an Aristotle was but the rudiments of an Adam, and Athens but the rubbish heap of Eden." Such a view could find no supporters at the present day. The ordinary view is that man fell not from a condition of perfection, mental and moral, but from a condition of uprightness and innocence, so that ever since the Fall every son of man has from birth been biassed in the direction of evil.

The attempt of the Jewish religion to provide the remedy for the disease of sin whereby, by means of sacrifices and "works of the law," man might be restored from the fallen to the upright condition has, according to the Pauline and subsequent traditional teaching, completely failed. But the Lord Christ, born of a sinless Virgin who was herself "immaculately conceived" so that by a special arrangement the entail of sin was cut off before the birth of the Mother of Jesus and no taint of birth-sin ever reached the Divine Redeemer Himself, did what the Jewish religion with its sacrifices and its Law of Moses failed to do. It has been the task of Christian theologians from very early times to try to explain how exactly the life and the willing death of Christ, combined with the subsequent work of the Holy Spirit in the Church, has redeemed or saved man from the effects of the Fall; how the estrangement between man and God, consequent upon man's sin, original and actual, has been healed, and how reconciliation or Atonement has been effected. The various theories of Atonement that have been suggested, together with the ramifications of the subject, constitute that elaborate and wonderfully intricate theological structure commonly known as the Catholic Faith. It will be sufficient for the purposes of this article to state in barest outline a few of the most important theories, ancient and modern, from which a general view of the whole vast structure can be gained, without going at length into all the theories that have

been propounded from Origen and Leo, through Anselm and Abelard down to Dale, McLeod Campbell, Moberly and Rashdall. It is interesting to note in passing that the various theories of the Atonement have been established on their own merit and have in no case been due, as in the case of the doctrine of the Incarnation, to the stress of controversy with heretics.

The theory which held the field for many centuries was that which taught that Christ by His death had ransomed man from his bondage to Satan. It is strange that a teaching so crude should have swayed the minds of men, many of whom were in other respects distinctly enlightened, for so long a time. Yet so it was, and it was not until the age of Anselm (12th century) that the theory of ransom completely broke down. English people may well be proud of that very distinguished Archbishop of Canterbury, Anselm, who by his little book "Cur Deus Homo?" (Why did God become man?) completely revolutionized thought on the subject of the Atonement. By this time revolution was long over-due, for the theory of the Son of God paying a ransom to Satan for the release of man from the bondage of sin, death and Hell, had been a scandal to many good Catholics long before Anselm suggested a more moral theory.

Anselm's theory was that sin needs satisfaction and that by sin man had incurred a debt, not to Satan, but to divine justice. The debt was far greater than man could pay because in any case all the service that man could possibly give was due to God, so that there could not be a surplus by which the old debt of mankind could be paid. Nor would it be sufficient for an Angel to pay it, for in that case man would be placed under an obligation of service to a mere creature. God only could pay the debt which man only had incurred. Therefore God must become man in order to pay the debt for man. Christ was God incarnate whose death, being far more than was due from Him, was sufficient to pay the debt; for that act alone outweighed all the sins of mankind. It was an ingenious and a reverent theory and marks a distinct advance on the old theory of ransom.

Then came Abelard who was partly contemporary with Anselm, with whose theory that no ransom was needed he agreed; but he went beyond Anselm in teaching that no satisfaction was needed either. God, he urged, could have pardoned man without any satisfaction being made for sin. The reason for the incarnation of the Son of God was the pure love of God for man, for only by such an incarnation could man be turned from sin and moved to love God and so abandon sin. Abelard was rather vehemently attacked by St. Bernard, but in the end St. Bernard's view did not differ very considerably from Abelard's. "Perhaps,"

said St. Bernard somewhat wistfully, as though his mind and his pure spirit had seen "some better thing" which he could not quite recall, "perhaps that method were best whereby in a land of forgetfulness and sloth we might be more powerfully and vividly reminded of our fall through the so great and so manifold sufferings of Him who repaired it."

The view which ultimately prevailed and, we may say, still very widely prevails in Catholic theology, was a combination of the opinions of Anselm and Abelard.

The most interesting and perhaps the most spiritual of modern theories is that of Dr. Moberly — an Anglican theologian and Oxford professor (d. 1903) — who in his great work **Atonement and Personality** introduced the idea that only a perfect man could experience perfect penitence and that without perfect penitence man's sin was unforgivable. Christ was such a perfect vicarious penitent and by His perfect penitence and perfect obedience mankind as a whole, whose manhood (without sin) Christ shared, was made forgivable. The forgiveness and the reconciliation thus secured are made applicable to man by man's sacramental union with the Lord. The theory is interesting and the refined spirit of the book makes a strong appeal, but the idea of vicarious penitence does not appear to be very strongly supported by the Gospel story. Nevertheless this theory, perhaps more than any other modern theory, has fashioned recent Anglican theology on this point. It is, however, always necessary to speak with caution of Anglican theology for, in that very comprehensive body, it is never possible to say what distinctive theology is common to all the parties in the **Ecclesia Anglicana.**

It is not, however, unfair to summarize the Catholic (whether Roman, orthodox Eastern or Anglican) teaching current at the present day in some such way as this:—

All men, because of their descent from Adam and Eve, or because of the solidarity of the human race, however descended, are morally diseased. The disease "original sin" is handed on from generation to generation. Christ was a sinless man who, in some way which has never yet been quite satisfactorily explained and which, indeed, baffles thought and defies explanation, by His perfect life and willingness to die paid a debt owing by mankind as a whole either to God or, impersonally, to divine justice. The effects of this sacrifice are reaped by such people as attach themselves to Christ by faith, prayer and good works (Protestant) and especially by a sacramental and very real union with Him (Catholic). By this sacramental and very real union man is grafted on to another and sinless stock, and so gets a new start. In such a state of grace he is regarded by God

as righteous because he is in such a state that, if he will, he can become so; whereas apart from union with Christ he is so much diseased by nature that he cannot become righteous. It is in this sense that the scriptural description of Christ as "the second Adam" is interpreted.

What man needs to be saved from is sin and its consequence—sorrow. The greatest of all sorrows and the cause of all lesser sorrows is alienation or estrangement, in some degree, from God. Man can only be saved by union with Christ; but when once that union has been effected by baptism, wherein and whereby original sin is counteracted, it can be constantly renewed and strengthened by communion; and the stains of actual sin can be constantly effaced by absolution following confession.

In this way, here in the Church militant on earth and subsequently in the Church expectant in Purgatory, man may become actually what, since baptism, he has been potentially—perfectly righteous and therefore, fit to be admitted into that condition known as full membership, with all the rights and privileges of sonship, in God's Kingdom which is the Church triumphant in heaven.

Such briefly but, it is hoped, not unfairly represents the teaching of Atonement generally taught and held by Catholics to-day. The old idea of Hell, as the thing to be saved from, may still linger amongst the illiterate, but the principle of salvation or atonement is the same whether it is from Hell, or from sin and sorrow, that man needs to be saved. Such is the teaching whose inspiration keeps so many Christians faithful to their altars and to their penitential "duties."

We need not criticise the details of the idea for, because of its emphasis on the sacramental union with Christ, it is so very admirable, however obscure it may be as to how the reconciliation is made or why any reconciliation is considered necessary. But the scheme as a whole seems just a little small. It does not explain how the countless millions of people who died before the Incarnation and so died "out of grace" or "in sin" are made partakers of the benefits secured by Christ. A scheme which only applies to a small minority of human beings during a very small period of man's tenancy of this planet, however beautiful it may be, is after all not such very "good news." Various theories have from time to time been suggested to remedy this very serious defect in the scheme but they are, frankly, too far fetched to be worthy of notice.

In the next two chapters we must consider the very different theory which the Liberal Catholicism of the Liberal Catholic Church sets over against the traditional Catholic theory.

CHAPTER SEVEN—THE DOCTRINE OF ATONEMENT.

(b) Liberal.

IN the preceding chapter an attempt was made to explain the orthodox or traditional doctrine of the Atonement to Liberal Catholics. In the present, and to some extent, in the next succeeding chapter an attempt will be made to explain to Traditionalists, imaginary or real, what Liberal Catholics think about that fundamental Christian doctrine.

In the first place it must be boldly stated that, as in the case of the doctrine of the Incarnation so in the doctrine of the Atonement, Liberal Catholics usually reject the Jewish background. They do not see the need for any reconciliation or atonement in the sense in which that need is stressed by Catholics and Protestants alike. Primitive man's despairing cry for salvation, though it may be found widespread outside the Jewish nation and religion, is particularly a Jewish idea, and is based on a theory of God and man which Liberal Catholics in common with an increasing number of people in the West, as always in the East, find it very difficult to accept. The Fall, whatever it was, did not produce such dire consequences as Christian theologians, following in the steps of their Jewish forefathers, have believed. The Fall was at worst, as a modern Scientist has explained, a fall on the upward step of evolution—a stumbling when man, emerging from a condition of animal innocence and being endowed with a further spiritual outpouring or breathing from God, first became "a living soul," a self-conscious entity. That is all. There is no estrangement from God and therefore no need of reconciliation; there is no original sin of such a nature as to fix a great gulf, made all the wider by actual sin, between God and man; and therefore there is no need for a bridge, there is no need to atone by blood sacrifice for the sins of those who, however base their sin and foul the shame of their sinning, have never ceased to be inwardly at one with the Father in Heaven. Consequently neither in the sinless life nor in the willing death of Jesus need we look for that obscure and elusive principle which constitutes the essence of the Atonement. Whatever the purpose of that marvellous life and tragic death it was not to 'make atonement' according to the Jewish scriptures. There is no wonder that even the most learned of theologians of all the ages have failed to discover that principle. It is not there, so it cannot be discovered. And yet there is a great truth in the doctrine of Atonement.

It has often been pointed out, and with great truth, that every heresy represents some fragment of neglected truth. It is equally true that there is in every orthodoxy, however obsolescent or obsolete, some great truth which has kept the teaching alive. In the Jewish idea of God for instance, whether it be the primitive idea of the tribal deity or the later and nobler conception taught by the prophets, that which is central to the idea is the aloofness of Jehovah—"coldly sublime, intolerably just." This idea, which is still so widely diffused as an orthodox teaching in the Christian Churches that it cannot be described as either obsolete or obsolescent, but is nevertheless losing its hold in the Churches and is generally rejected by Liberals, has within it a very great truth. It is that God, though incarnate in all mankind and consequently not aloof or detached from any man, does, nevertheless, utterly transcend that fragment of His being which represents, and which is, His creative activity; He ensouls universes and sustains them in being. So utterly transcendent is He that those fragments of Himself, which are ourselves, will as they evolve find that He ever recedes; and though those fragments of God, who share His being, may and will eventually become one with Him outwardly and self-consciously, as they ever are inwardly and subconsciously, they will never reach Him; they will 'enter the light but will never touch the Flame.' That probably was the great truth for which the Jewish religion stood, however imperfectly the Jews of Our Lord's day and before could grasp it.

And behind the Christian-Jewish idea of Atonement there is also a profoundly important truth. It is the truth of the larger Incarnation; the truth that before all ages God sent forth from Himself that part or fragment of Himself which is described as His Son, alone-begotten (ογεμον νής) to ensoul matter and fashion it into forms or things when it had been already 'quickened' or made living by the Holy Ghost the Life-Giver. The matter at every grade, which must be conceived of as having itself in some unimaginable way come forth from God, was at first and before the outpouring of the Holy breath or spirit, lifeless and barren or virgin. Then came the Holy Ghost brooding over this sea (mare) of virgin matter; "the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." Thus matter when impregnated by Spirit became living matter but still formless matter; "the earth was without form and void." Then came the Logos or Son of God, the Christos-principle, involving Himself in this sea of living matter, multiplying and differentiating in His descent, and arranging the live matter into living forms, visible and invisible. He it is Who, in all living forms from the highest to the lowest, is the Son of God, incarnate of

the union of the Holy Ghost and the virgin matter; but especially in man and in superman, for when the human stage is reached there is still a third outpouring from the Father, another breathing from God, by virtue of which man becomes a living soul in the image of God, as distinct from sub-human beings which are more like ingredients in a mixture than living persons or souls. It is thus the Second Person in the Blessed Trinity, or God the Son, "by Whom all things were made"; He, too, is the indwelling Light Whose wisdom "mightily and sweetly ordereth all things"; He the Sustainer, by Whose strength all creation is upheld; He, too, the divine Beauty which, veiled or unveiled, shines through the whole universe. This incarnation of God the Son and this becoming man is the age-long sacrifice of the Son of God, described in the Apocalypse as "the lamb slain from the foundation of the world." This is the inner meaning of the crucifixion story—the Son of God bound and fettered to a cross of matter; God slain in every form. It is, too, to the incarnation of the Son of God in this larger sense, and not to any nescience in Jesus Christ that we must look for the true meaning of the striking passage in Philippians II. 6. where it is stated that "being in the form of God He did not think it a prize to be grasped to be equal with God, but emptied (ἐκένωσε) Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men." Surely this is the meaning of this famous passage and, if so, the solution of the perplexing Kenosis problem.

In this fact also is to be found the true interpretation of the Resurrection and Ascension dramas. For as it is true that in all creative evolution up to regenerate man the Son of God is imprisoned, crucified, dead and buried, so it is equally true that in such a One as the Lord Christ and in all who, following Him, have subdued the flesh to the spirit, the lower to the higher: in all who have rolled away the encumbrance of the lower, material, self-seeking self and emerged from the tomb and from the death of sin and selfishness to the new life of transcendent righteousness and self-consciousness of divinity, and so of oneness with the Father and with all living things—in the Lord pre-eminently, and in all other such—the Son of God has "risen from the dead" and "ascended into heaven."

The Son of God, having thus truly risen and ascended in the Lord Christ, fittingly says through the lips of that perfect manifestation of Himself "I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify me with Thine own self, with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was." In such a one as the Lord Christ the incarnating Son has come to His own and now

knows Himself as one with the Father and with all that lives. He has led captive the matter which at an earlier stage kept the indwelling spirit in captivity. Matter in His case is now the slave of spirit, obedient to the will of spirit, whereas matter at lower stages of evolution is the tyrant which sways the ensouling spirit and compels spirit to obey its least behest. And what the Son of God has achieved in the Lord, He will also achieve, in the long run, in every child of God.

That is the age-long sacrifice by which every man is not only being 'saved' but by virtue of which he has his very existence. It is not only "for us men and for our salvation" but for us men and for our evolution that the Son of God "came down from heaven and was made man." The evolution of man is a fact; it is still proceeding. The salvation of man is not yet a fact in every life, but it is to be a fact in ourselves as in Our Lord, and all the sooner in ourselves because of His achievement and because of His mighty aid whereby He helps us to evolve to the great height which He Himself has reached. It is to be a fact; every son of man shall in his time come to Oneness with the Father, because every man is indwelt by, and is a fragment of, the Christ-spirit—the Son of God incarnate in the universe. In this sense the sacrifice is universal; it is for all, not limited to just a few. It is commensurate with the human race; and each human being, to say nothing at this point of other beings, will evolve, life after life, in this and in other worlds, till the Christ-spirit within is triumphant and ascends "in the twinkling of an eye" to the glory which it had with the Father before the world was. And the sacrifice is also age-long, not "once for all" on Calvary. It lasts and will last throughout all ages until all that is material and corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and all that is mortal shall have put on immortality, and the death of sin shall have been completely swallowed up in the victory of spirit.

Those who will take the trouble to read again the New Testament with this key will soon realize how many hitherto dark and hidden places are opened out and illumined. This teaching of spiritual evolution, so mystical and, by its truth, its breadth and its beauty, so compelling, has rarely been more exquisitely expressed than in those words of the Liberal Catholic liturgy which, though not used at every Eucharist, are embedded in the very heart of the Eucharistic service—"we lift our hearts in adoration to Thee, O God the Son, consubstantial, co-eternal with the Father, who, abiding unchangeable within Thyself, didst nevertheless in the mystery of Thy boundless love and Thine eternal sacrifice breathe forth Thine own divine life into Thy universe, and thus didst offer Thyself as the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, dying in very truth that we might live . . . . . .

Thou, O most dear and holy Lord, hast in Thine ineffable wisdom deigned to ordain for us this Blessed Sacrament of Thy love that in it we may not only commemorate in symbol that Thine eternal oblation, but verily take part in it and perpetuate thereby, within the limitations of time and space which veil our earthly eyes from the excess of Thy glory, the enduring sacrifice by which the world is nourished and sustained."

In this teaching it matters not whether the field of evolution is the whole Cosmos, with all its universes that are and that have been, or just a single system within the universe; the principle and the process in either case are the same.

To most Liberal Catholics the sacrificial death of God the Son, or the Atoning Sacrifice, means just that. The Son of God dies that we may live. Nothing more than that, because surely beyond or in addition to that nothing can be needed. Those who hold such a view may surely be pardoned for preferring it to the Jewish ideas of the wrath of God, estrangement, blood-sacrifice and hardly won atonement. Yet, strangely, the idea of the larger Incarnation, which is not by any means unknown to the Christian mystics of all ages, is not considered sufficient in itself by the Catholic Church. Even that teaching, so sublime and, in itself, so sufficient, has to be made to fit the Jewish teaching. The greater has to be subordinated to the less, the larger and broader idea to the smaller and narrower; the age-long spiritual process has to be compressed within the local and temporal 'historical acts'—that the scriptures may be fulfilled. Thus the inner teaching is degraded and weakened though never lost, and those who look for no other atonement than this, and plead no other sacrifice than this, are often in the eyes of the Churches, regarded not merely as heretics, but as non-Christian.

What, on this explanation, it is often asked, becomes of the great miracles of the Christian faith? What of the Virgin Birth and the Empty Tomb? What of the 'historical facts' which are held by so many Christian teachers to be of fundamental importance?

Nothing becomes of them. They remain as they were, and are, and always must be—unaltered. If they are facts they cannot be altered; no disbelief in them can undo or alter them. And if they are not facts no amount of belief in them can make them facts. It is useless to discuss them as though they were alterable. But no great religion can be built on the foundation of outer acts and historical facts; or, changing the metaphor, can grow downwards from the flower to the roots, or from the material to the spiritual plane. Frankly, it is probable that many Liberals, Catholic as well as Protestant, would dare to hope that the Virgin-birth

of Christ was not a historical fact. Reverence for Our Lord, Who is a very real Being, Who really did incarnate in Palestine and does still watch over and guide His sheep of the Christian and of every other fold, would constrain them to believe that His birth, however it may have been, was otherwise than as the Traditionalists affirm. Such a birth would not have been congruous. Apart from the stigma of illegitimacy, which could be attached to it, it bears too strong a resemblance to the legendary births of pagan demigods to be a fitting mode of entry into this world for one so real as the Lord Christ.

But miracles such as the Virgin Birth and the Empty Tomb are, in the view of Liberals, of no doctrinal value. A great religion must not depend for its credentials on miraculous happenings, however historical. In any case they prove nothing. If they happened, it does not matter; and if they did not happen, it makes no difference. To construct spiritual doctrines on physical facts is surely an inverted arrangement; it is, too, a precarious process, for the facts may turn out not to have happened. That is the weak point, and a very weak point, in that great structure commonly known as the Catholic Faith. In the Liberalist view, on the other hand, the whole scheme grows not out of 'historical facts' of doubtful historicity, but out of spiritual processes which, so long as man and universes exist, can never cease to happen.

That is the difference, yet Liberal Catholics are quite at one with Traditional Catholics in their devotion both to the Lord Himself and to the great Saint known as the Blessed Virgin Mary. The Mother of Jesus is none the less gracious and adorable for that Her Son was normally born, if that was the method of His birth. Such, too, is the honour which many Liberalists pay to Her that they can and do, in perfect accord with their Traditionalist brethren, acclaim Her as Queen of Heaven.

And members of the Liberal Catholic Church even exceed the Traditionalist Catholics, if that is possible, in their devotion to the Lord really present in the Sacrament of His Love. Trans-substantiation is not so very far from the Liberals' conception of the truth on this point. There is, in this belief, a distinct trans-substantiation or change of substance, though not of accidents. This discredited philosophy is probably true. Christ is very really present in the consecrated and transubstantiated elements. The Presence is not dependent upon the faith of the recipient, but is an objective Presence **ex opere operato** dependent upon the will of the Lord and vouchsafed whenever the Mass is celebrated by a truly ordained priest or bishop using the appropriate words and signs of power. But the 'Body and Blood' into which the substances of bread and wine are changed are not quite the

body and blood in the rather gross sense in which many Catholics, cultured as well as illiterate, seem to view it. Yet they do in very deed undergo a change and become vehicles of the Lord; the Bread and Wine after consecration are as truly a vehicle for the Lord now, as the body of Jesus was His vehicle in Palestine two thousand years ago.

Rightly do Catholics, Liberal as well as Traditional, pay homage and adoration to the Lord Christ Who sheweth Himself daily "upon a thousand altars" and yet is "one and indivisible." There is nothing miraculous in this if by "miraculous" is understood something **contra naturam.** It is, like all the wonders of all the sacraments, in accordance with law, but with such laws as are not yet generally understood and are not recognized, because not yet 'scientifically' proved, by any but occult scientists. Starting from different premises, Liberalists of the Liberal Catholic Church and Traditionalists of other Catholic Churches arrive at the same conclusion about the Eucharist by different but equally logical syllogisms.

And the effect of Eucharistic grace on faithful communicants is also scientific and in accordance with law. It is certainly wonderful but not miraculous. It is mystical but not unscientific. In order to become "perfect as the Father in heaven is perfect" man must first evolve until he has become sufficiently refined and spiritual to reproduce to some extent, and then gradually to an ever greater extent, the rapid vibrations of the Lord Christ. Then, when he has evolved to such an extent that he can retain the vibrations of the Lord, that is to say has become one with Him, he will find that he is becoming one with the Father. Those momentary experiences of ecstasy or bliss that come to him from time to time when he makes a good communion will be permanent when he becomes permanently one with the Lord. Then he too, ever "breathing forth the fragrance of a holy life" will become more and more effectually a saviour of his fellows; and still he will grow until he becomes a Saviour of men to the fullest possible extent. No limit can be set to his becoming, but it depends upon himself whether he will be content to wait upon the slow and tedious process of evolution, or whether he will take his evolution into his own hands and grow rapidly from sinner to saint, and from saint to saviour; from self-conscious man to self-unconscious man, and from self-unconscious man to Self-conscious man, and, therefore, super-man.

The height to which man may rise is by ordinary men unimaginable, but the rising process is all a matter of spiritual evolution, and spiritual evolution is all a matter of vibrations. It is very scientific. To reach the Christ level will in many cases take ages and in all cases it must involve effort; there is no substitution;

nothing is, or will be, done for us which we can do and ought to do for ourselves. But we Catholic Christians can be, and are, enormously helped, as the followers of other Faiths are also helped in their own special ways, by the priceless privilege of being allowed to come into real and close contact with Our Lord in the Sacraments. The real and regular communicant is being gradually tuned to the pitch of his Lord; he is, like the string of a musical instrument, being gradually tightened until he can sound forth perfectly the Lord's note. That, in the Liberal Catholic view, is the purpose of the sacraments. In sharp contradistinction to the views of many Modernists and liberal Churchmen who are not Catholics, Liberal Catholics of the Liberal Catholic Church proclaim their belief in the Real Presence. In it they see nothing superstitious or merely mediæval. They see rather a profound and fundamental truth without which, in their view, the Christian religion would be hardly worth defending or perpetuating.

It is the imperishable glory of the Roman Catholic Church that through all its vicissitudes and in spite of all the wrongs that it has inflicted and suffered, it has never for a moment lost its hold of this great truth. Always it has proclaimed the Real Presence of the Lord in the Eucharist. And, though in so many doctrines the Liberalists differ so widely from the Traditionalists, they are at one with them in their devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. With them they believe that the Lord is there present; they believe it because they can sense it and because they can see the effects of it in the lives and characters of so many Catholic (Roman, Anglican or Eastern) communicants. The Christian 'grace of graciousness' is unmistakable though indefinable; it is something **sui generis;** where you get a profound belief in the Real Presence, there, and rarely elsewhere, you get this special quality; other qualities may be, and certainly are, found elsewhere; but there is something exclusively Catholic in that very beautiful 'grace of graciousness' which, when seen, is evidence to those who need evidence of the reality of the divine Presence in the Mass. But it is not the only evidence. The Real Presence can be, and has been explained in scientific terms,[1] and it may well be that that scientific explanation, not only of the Eucharistic Presence but of the functions and services of Angels and of much else in the mysteries of the Catholic religion, will prove in years to come to have been the special and distinctive contribution of Liberal Catholicism to the great treasure-house of the Catholic religion; so great and so important a contribution that it may save the Church for future generations, guiding it safely as it passes through the perilous transition stage from the dying age of faith to the living age of **Scientia.**

(1) See **The Science of the Sacraments** by The Rt. Rev. C. W. Leadbeater.

CHAPTER EIGHT—SIN, ITS CAUSE AND ITS CURE.

IT has been explained in a previous article that it is commonly believed throughout Christendom, whether in Catholic Churches or in Protestant and Nonconformist denominations, that the whole human race is sin-stained. The whole human stock is diseased and **ipso facto** every human being is tainted from birth. That is the doctrine of original sin. In the words of the Church of England catechism every child is "by nature born in sin" and the child "of wrath." Not a few of the more intellectual Christian teachers have now discarded the "Fall" explanation of the sin phenomenon; but the human race is still regarded as diseased and, consequently, in need of healing, by practically all the orthodox. The whole of Catholic theology is based on the assumption or dogma that mankind as a whole is a diseased race.

In view of the quite obvious fact of sin, and in default of a better explanation, this is a reasonable theory; it is also logical; it hangs together and the logic is correct; but are the premisses true? May there not be some other, and better, theory to account for the sin phenomenon?

Let us examine the Catholic teaching once more and in greater detail than when the doctrine of atonement was under examination, for sin is certainly an important factor in life and in religion and cannot be disregarded or lightly regarded by any religious body, new or old.

Over against the sin-diseased human stock is placed the Catholic Church which, by virtue of its Oneness with the sinless Lord, is not diseased. The Church is the mystical Body of Christ and, as such, it is sometimes described as the extension of the Incarnation. Christ is the Head, the Church is the Body, and incorporation into the Church by baptism involves and carries with it the counteraction of the disease and taint of birth sin. The baptised person is a child "of grace." Baptism is thus a regeneration or new birth into a new stock, and the child, born naturally in sin, is re-born baptismally and becomes the "child of grace." A new start in the story of man is made by the Christian Church, which can be put over against the old start made by Adam and Eve; and a life in Christ, that is a life lived in conscious fellowship and communion with the new Body, the Church, whose Head is Christ, will result here and hereafter in such progress being made that the human perfection, originally designed, will at length be reached.

A very strong objection, if not the main objection, to this theory is that the cure is not commensurate with the disease. The cure to be really adequate and to be worthy of God, if, as is assumed, mankind is diseased, must be co-extensive in its application with the human race. The Christian Church, at most, includes but an inconsiderable fragment of the race; if, as is usually believed in Western countries, each human being has but one incarnation on earth, the Christian Church, compared with all the human beings that have been in the hundreds of thousands or even millions of years of the existence of a human race on the planet Earth, is an almost negligible body; and if the Christian Church is to be limited, as the Roman Catholic Church would limit it, to that portion which owes allegiance to the Pope, the cure becomes ludicrously inadequate. The Church, thus limited, compared with the whole human race, that has been and that is, is like a handful of sand taken from the sea-shore. The cure breaks down at that point, to say nothing of other weaknesses. If a cure is needed it must be some larger cure than that, but it is as well to see if there is not some other explanation of the "sin" phenomenon before another cure is sought.

The evolutionary theory of the cause and the cure certainly fits the lock, that is to say it is equal in its extent to the phenomenon itself. Briefly it is this. In the long long process of evolution from the One to the One, units of consciousness, which are the differentiated fragments of the Son of God incarnate in the universe, are continually descending deeper and deeper into matter. These units are for long held captive by the unaccustomed material environment in which they find themselves. They are "so fast in prison that they cannot get forth." But they have come in order to conquer the imprisoning matter and eventually they will do so; they, like the Lord before them, will in the long run lead captivity captive. But in the early stages of their struggle to adapt matter to spiritual ends, they become by the struggle more and more sharply individualized; they become less and less ingredients in a mixture, and more and more persons; and, blinded and confused by the matter in which they are clothed, they follow the law of material evolution which is—each for himself. This long process continues, after the stage of individualization as human beings has been reached, through hundreds of incarnations or periods of activity in the flesh, with periods of rest, increasing in length as evolution proceeds, in between. These units of consciousness, it must be understood, are, in the incarnate condition which is the condition of embodied human beings, but fragments of fragments of the true self which is the spirit. The differentiated spirit, which exists in Christ in God, is the subject of evolution.

Ultimately it is he who is evolving through all the ages. He is a fragment of the Son of God, of the Christ-spirit incarnate in all the worlds. At a very early stage in the process he projects from himself a portion of himself into matter lower and denser than that which is his own habitat. This projection or fragment of spirit is the human soul or reincarnating ego who exists "age-long in the heavenly places"; it is he who at intervals projects from himself a portion of himself to the physical material world. This is the process of re-incarnation. This fragment of soul is the human being as we know him here on this earth. He bears the same relation to soul as soul bears to spirit. The larger soul or ego from which the embodied soul proceeds is the "unconscious self" or "super-consciousness" of modern psychology. After each incarnation the soul is enlarged by the contribution which the returning fragment of himself brings with him. When by repeated incarnations he has completely conquered matter he will cease to incarnate and will himself be withdrawn into the spirit whence he came. Then super-human evolution begins. That is the point known in Christianity as Salvation. Each fragment of soul may be termed the lower self or lower personality as opposed to the higher self which is, relatively to the lower personality, the soul; though, relatively to the soul, the higher self and highest self is the human spirit—the differentiated fragment of the Son of God.

Gradually this spirit within, which is the real self of everyone, asserts his power over his material clothing and surroundings; he comes to his own and begins, at first dimly and then more and more clearly, to recognize his oneness with other spirits similarly clothed in material envelopes. Love comes simultaneously with recognition or, perhaps, love is mutual recognition; and where there is love, and increasingly as love deepens its hold and enlarges its circles, the old material self-seeking method of development gives place to self-sacrifice—the method of spiritual growth. Then, much later, there comes the recognition and consciousness of oneness with those ahead on this long path of evolution, with the superhuman saints and Holy Ones, with the Saviour of the world, and so with the source of all spiritual being, with the Father, with God. Eventually the incarnate spirit triumphs completely over the imprisoning, entombing matter; he draws the soul, filled full, back into himself; he leads captivity captive; he has gained perfect control over matter and does what he wills with it, for he has made it completely subservient to his will; and in the process he himself has become clearly defined as an individual, and godlike; he does the divine will "on earth

as in heaven" and, though a distinct being, yet he is completely one with other beings; he lives now for ever and in the Eternal. He is now an Elder Brother.

In the long, long process of involution and evolution there comes sin. Sin is opposition, voluntary or involuntary, blind or deliberate, to the will and the plan of God which is evolution. This opposition can conceivably, and, in certain cases, does actually result in deliberate defiance of the purpose of God and of the law by which God has designed that that purpose shall be effected. Hence we get malignity which, as the Traditionalists rightly point out, is certainly something more than, and different from, imperfection. All sin, even the sin which is devilish in its malignity, is ultimately due to, and caused by, the necessity of becoming definitely individualized, distinct from mankind in the mass and more than an ingredient in the human mixture. The individualizing process can be overdone, and when and where it is overdone, and wrongly done, there ensues "envy, hatred, malice" and all that brood of malignant uncharitablenesses which has its roots in pride. Pride is overdone individualization. The extreme cases in which defiance of the will and of the purpose of God is deliberate, the sin against the Holy Ghost, are happily very rare; but even in such extreme cases the spirit within remains whole. The spirit dwells for ever serene in the highest heaven where no evil can touch it; it is only that portion of spirit which has descended to the soul level and thence into incarnation that is, or can be, affected by evil. In very extreme cases the fragment of soul, which is the human being, may become so bad that the parent soul, unable to control it, is under the necessity of detaching it from himself. The fragment, thus detached from its source of life, is a lost soul or, more strictly speaking, a lost fragment of soul, and will eventually, when the detached life-principle within it is exhausted, cease to exist. Thus there may be a lost fragment of soul but never an eternally punished soul; and, in this way, a human spirit may suffer loss; he may suffer the loss of a fragment of a fragment of himself eternally, but the whole human spirit, which is the true self and which is divine, can never be lost. In less extreme cases, however, the soul within will bring back to correspondence with himself the fragment of himself, the lower personality, which has "gone wrong." He will bring it back to correspondence with himself and so with God eventually; for the spirit within the soul is God and abides as a distinct spirit eternally in the Son of God; he is in Christ in God; and his will is always God's will; there is, and there can be, no conflict between the divine will and the human spirit's will: they will alike; the human spirit is the divine will in operation. Such conflict as there is and as we all experience fre-

quently is between the will of that fragment of spirit, which has descended through soul into matter and which in Christian terminology is described as "the human soul," and the parent spirit from which it has been put forth. That is the age-long conflict; it is the conflict between the higher and the lower self. In the course of ages the incarnate soul which, in the blindness of the incarnate condition, has departed from exact correspondence with the will of the parent spirit, and so of God, the soul that has sinned, will be brought back to true correspondence; but not without pain and in some cases only after almost infinite delay. The pain in every case being exactly commensurate with the transgression of law, is at once a perfectly just corrector and a perfectly just corrective leading the erring soul to correspondence with the Christ-spirit within. But this is an anticipation. The cause of sin must be more carefully examined before we can satisfactorily consider its cure.

Involution into matter is on this theory the cause of sin. This does not mean, as some of the Gnostics and Manichaeans taught, that matter is essentially evil. It is not. Far from being evil matter is God's handiwork and, like all else that God has made, it is "very good." But the law which governs the evolution of matter, is exactly opposite to the law which governs the evolution of spirit. The preservation and reproduction of material forms depends upon acquisition; the growth and evolution of spirit upon sacrifice. These are "contrary one to the other," but each is right and very good in its own sphere. Material forms could not grow by the law which governs spiritual growth, nor can spirit evolve under the material law; if matter sacrifices, it suffers loss; and if spirit "seeks its own" it ceases to evolve. In that contradiction and opposition of laws of evolution, as between the material and the spiritual, is to be found the cause and the whole cause of the confusion known as sin. Spirits blinded by matter seek to evolve according to the law of material evolution. Such is sin. It is well worth while reading and re-reading Romans VII and VIII with this key.

It was not unforeseen, nor is it a matter for hysterical alarm. Nothing has gone wrong with the plan. It is in perfectly safe hands. But until spirit, in the long course of involution into matter and evolution out of it, comes to its own, it is blinded in greater or less degree by its coating of matter and follows the law which governs the evolution of matter, the law of acquisition—each for himself. That is sin. It is "Another law in my members warring against the law of my mind and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members."

Sin, on this theory, is rather a matter for abandonment than for forgiveness. It has to be transcended and outgrown some time, and the sooner the better. Its punishment is within itself.

Those are two theories Catholic and evolutionary, of the cause; let us now examine the two theories of the cure.

The traditional Catholic teaching of the cure of sin is that it can be forgiven upon true penitence and after confession. The forgiveness has been hardly won by Christ's death and is applied to individuals through the sacraments. On the evolutionary theory penitence, contrition, confession, absolution and reparation may have their place but they should be viewed against the larger background of evolution, as aids to evolution and not as ends in themselves. It is a mistake to suppose that God is greatly upset by man's sin and needs to be propitiated. Sin is almost inevitable in the process of involution. The word "sin" having by long association become identified with the idea of defiance and guilty disobedience of law needs to be replaced by a new term which will fit the evolutionary theory. The word needed lies somewhere between imperfection and crime; it should connote something stronger than mistake, but not so strong as the guilt connoted by the word "sin." The Greek word ἁμάρτημα or ἁμαρτία which means "missing the mark" would be more satisfactory than sin if a single English word could be found exactly to represent it. God is not made angry by sin, nor is He hurt, nor offended. He knows what is happening and His plan is not failing, nor can it be finally frustrated by sin. There is no need therefore to over-emphasize the guilt of sin or to stress the need of man's self-humiliation.

At this point it is necessary to consider at some length the question of the Sacrament of Penance which holds so very important a place in this connection in the Catholic scheme. To the Traditionalist Catholic penance or individual confession and absolution is the application to the individual of the fruits of the Atonement won for mankind by Christ's death upon the cross. It is obvious from what has already been said that Liberals are not likely to share this view. Still less are they likely to regard with any other feelings than those of abhorrence all the accessories of the sacrament of penance so frequently found in Catholic Churches. Those Liberals who have ever been to confession in one or other of the older branches of the Catholic Church, though no doubt grateful for the kindness of the priests and for their obvious desire to help, must have felt that the atmosphere of the confessional and the attitude of the priests towards sin

were quite out of tune with reality. Especially they must have felt that the Catholic classifications and categories of sin were altogether misleading, determined as they seem to be rather by national conventions and temporal codes of expediency than by eternal standards of right and wrong. Their categories strain at a gnat and swallow a camel. The prevailing idea of the confessional is of a very much grieved and distinctly anthropo-passionate deity, whose grief caused by our sin is such that only by the awful death of Christ upon the cross, regarded as in some way a complete fulfilment of all the Hebraic blood-sacrifices and as "the one, true, pure immortal sacrifice" for sin, could that grief be allayed and the penitent's guilt removed. To stimulate a frame of mind in tune with this idea the Catholics, especially of the Roman Catholic Church where the practice is universal, have recourse to pictures and figures of the Lord, hanging with lacerated body and tortured features from the cross; or, even worse, with pierced and bleeding heart exposed to view. These simulacra, so freely scattered in Catholic churches and so frequently and publicly exposed to view in Catholic shops, are in themselves by their very ugliness disfiguring to what are otherwise sometimes beautiful buildings; but what is worse is that, by the ideas they suggest, they are dishonouring to God and degrading alike to those who direct the souls of others and to those who are directed into that way; and, worst of all, they are exceedingly insulting and offensive to the Lord Himself. Members of the Liberal Catholic Church will undoubtedly have the sympathy of many reverent-minded people outside all the Churches, when they express their disapproval of such grotesque images and pictures, and boldly declare that they cannot even remotely resemble the features and appearance of the Lord as He really is. Such aids to penitence and devotion together with the pitiful appeals for mercy so frequently occurring in the liturgies of all the Churches, whether Catholic or Protestant, are mediaeval superstitions, relics of the worst type of Jehovah worship, dishonouring to God and degrading to man. Of all these the Liberal Catholic Church has made a clean sweep: "we go by, and lo, they are gone; we seek them, but their place can nowhere be found."

Frankly, the God of the orthodox confessional is quite out of date: we of the present day "have not so learned Christ": the God of the confessional is emphatically not the Father revealed by Our Lord, nor is the orthodox Catholic conception of Our Lord's part in the atoning transaction worthy of intelligent and reverent human beings. Nevertheless the Sacrament of Penance has its place in the Christian scheme as Liberal Catholics conceive it. It is a force proceeding from the Lord Himself by means of which those spiritual entanglements

with matter, which are of such frequent occurrence at our stage of evolution, are straightened out, and mental and emotional disturbances calmed. It is equally effectual whether applied individually after private and personal confession, or appropriated by each individual when confession and absolution occur in the public service of the Church. On the whole the tendency in the Liberal Catholic Church is to discourage private confession and absolution except in special cases. The private application of the grace of absolution is not in the Liberal Catholic Church a matter of obligation for "a state of grace." To this extent, which is a very considerable extent, the Liberal Catholic Church differs from the practice and teaching of the Roman and Anglo-Catholic Churches.

What then, to return to the former question, is the true cure of sin? Evolution is its cure as involution is its cause. As soon as the incongruity of a spiritual being living according to the law and method of material evolution, is seen and appreciated as incongruous by the unit of consciousness concerned, the turning point is reached. That is the moment of conversion, and from that moment the incarnate spirit sets himself to live "no longer after the law of a carnal commandment, but by the power of an endless life"; he begins to save the soul by losing and giving it. From that moment onwards, through as many incarnations as it takes to reach human perfection, the evolving spirit shows forth increasingly in incarnate conditions the life of the spirit which is the life of love and self-sacrifice.

Up to this point his involution consisted in the continual appropriation of matter to satisfy the desires of the incarnate self; from this point his evolution consists in the continual renunciation of the material things by the incarnate self. The point of conversion or turning marks the time when he ceases to be of the world worldly, and becomes increasingly apart from the world and other-worldly. He gradually disentangles himself from sin and its effects.

CHAPTER NINE—CONVERSION AND AFTER.

SHORN of its Salvation Army associations, Conversion is a very beautiful idea, and almost the most important word in the Christian language. It is important because it denotes a stage in human evolution than which perhaps only the stage denoted by the word Salvation or, in the terminology of evolutionary mysticism, Initiation, is more important. Never since the evolving life-centre emerged, ages before, from the sub-human kingdom and, met at the threshold of humanity by a great downpouring of spiritual force from the Father in Heaven, became a living soul, has an event of such transcendent significance as Conversion occurred. Rightly have evangelicals, both Catholic and Protestant, insisted on the reality and on the importance of Conversion.

Conversion marks the turning-point in the age-long career of a soul or re-incarnating ego. For ages the human soul has been immersed in gloom; so deeply immersed has he been that in the incarnate condition he has forgotten the very existence of light and does not know that there is anywhere anything better than gloom; consequently he has not consciously sought the light. Then he peeps above the surface of the sea of matter and sees a world of spiritual life and knows that that is his true home. At last the light dawns; he sees at first only faint glimmerings of it, but it is light; the soul within awakens; he knows now that he is a spirit, and not, as he has for so long thought without thinking, a mass of disintegrating matter. Up to this stage he has lived his lives and gone his way carelessly, swayed by matter, life after life, for hundreds of lives. Until Conversion he has lived in and for the body and the satisfaction of its senses; in and of the world and the enjoyment of its pleasures; harmless perhaps because, though blinded by matter, a spiritual being; but thoughtless, careless, mostly selfish and a little gross. After Conversion slowly and gradually the soul makes his presence felt and injects more and more of himself into the lower personality. The man becomes gradually more refined and more responsive to spiritual impulses.

Then there comes the complete awakening of the Soul. The soul within becomes wide awake. "Sudden in a moment" or very gradually, but very distinctly, there dawns in his waking consciousness the light; "faintly and dimly, hidden and afar" he is aware of it in the body; the consciousness of the lower personality has linked up momentarily with the consciousness of the soul, and, "in the twinkling of

an eye" perhaps, he has become aware of the life of spirit and of his true home in the heavenly places. He will lose the vision, but he has seen it and can never again, in that or in any succeeding life, forget. It will not for ever after be vividly present in his lower or brain consciousness but henceforth that consciousness will be suffused with light. His face is now set definitely homewards. Less and less does he care for the world and the flesh; the pleasures of life and the joys of riches cease to please though for many lives to come these will hold him back. More and more is he responsive to heavenly things; music or art, poetry or philosophy, religion or altruistic service, scientific research or handicraft will hold his interest increasingly; gradually he becomes bigger, better, purer, stronger.

So he evolves, and life after life the battle rages within. The momentum of the old downward, earthward, fleshward tendency is, for long after the turn has been made, an imperious force; the momentum of that tendency cannot be checked, held up and reversed suddenly or even in a single life; the effect of all the lives that have been lived in and for the body, in and of the world, and for and to the lesser self, cannot be worked out in a short time. He must reap what he has sown, and whilst he reaps he still sows the old bad seed together with the good seed that he has learned since Conversion to draw from within. It is at this stage, so bitter and so sweet, the stage between Conversion and Salvation, that the experience so vividly described in the Pauline epistles is most keenly felt: "The flesh lusteth against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye do not the things that ye would." "The good that I would I do not, but the evil that I would not that I do." "I delight in the law of God after the inward man, but I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind." (Romans vii.)

It is at this stage also that religion can most help the torn soul if he will understand it and welcome its help. At all stages of human evolution religion is designed to help progressing souls, but it is when the conflict is most keen that its help is most effectual, because then it is most needed. It was to help men to reach Salvation that Christ founded the Christian Church. Through other great faiths—Hinduism, Buddhism, Zorastrianism—the same Lord helps others to reach the same Salvation, for there are many folds but one Shepherd. In the Christian religion, especially in the Catholic parts of it, the "means of grace" or sacraments are especially His means of help. Scriptures, prayers, fellowship one with another are useful accessories of religion, but the very essence of the Catholic religion is the

grace or power of the Lord Himself distributed to us on earth through sacraments. Daily through sacraments the Lord feeds the hungering sheep; graciously He tends those communicants who draw nigh to Him sacramentally; tenderly and carefully He watches over those who "know the things that belong unto their peace" and "as a hen gathers her chickens under her wing" so He gathers His communicants into His protecting care. It is this food and this care that are needed so specially after Conversion and that are so exceedingly helpful to those who are wise enough to receive them.

Before Conversion there was little conflict, for the vision of reality had not then been seen; at that time the voice of the soul was silenced, and the feeble godly motions were stifled and made more feeble by the clamant demands of the world and the flesh. But after Conversion a battle-royal rages—the battle between the flesh and the soul, between matter evolving by the law of acquisition and spirit evolving by the law of love and sacrifice. This is the real state of sin; the man now, when he does wrong, does it knowing that it is wrong; the momentum is too strong for him. Before Conversion he sinned and was selfish through blindness; now he sins from impotence but not in blindness. Recovery is a long, long process; a single life would not be enough to bring him to such a state and not nearly enough for his recovery from it. Life after life the struggle lasts; in each incarnation life is a little less material, a little more spiritual than in former lives; there may be slippings back, but progress, in spite of occasional "falls from grace," is generally, after Conversion, upward and uniform. The bodies, as evolution proceeds, become finer in proportion as the lower personality becomes more spiritual. In the early stages of evolution the bodies are gross and ugly, in the later stages after Conversion, they tend to be refined, more beautiful, somewhat ascetic. Physical evolution proceeds side by side and **pari passu** with super-physical and spiritual evolution, for they are supplementary and complementary one to the other. In the later stages, when "the world, the flesh and the devil" have been to a considerable extent mastered, personal religion consists chiefly in toning down the excrescences and protuberances of the lower personality; at every turn the excess of personality makes its pressure felt; in look and speech and gait and mannerisms its presence is revealed; it needs to be at-one-ed with the higher self, or soul, and so with all other higher selves; but it will not easily renounce what seems to be essential to its separate existence: "I am I," it says, "I am I and no other," and it will not emerge from the separating mould which for ages has shaped the individuality. But gradually as the fog

scatters, the grip of the lower personality is relaxed. The light becomes clearer and then there comes a great loneliness; the things of the world and the flesh no longer attract but not yet is the life of spirit, with its exquisite joys, realized; the man must live his lives in the world, but he must be lonely for he is no longer of the world; and yet somehow he is never less alone than when alone. His affections are now almost wholly set on things above—on the arts and sciences, on religious mysticism or social idealism—but these never quite suffice: there is a vague dissatisfaction, a vague longing for he knows not what, an undefined yearning for a fuller and an ampler existence. The soul within him sees but, being still in the flesh, he "sees through a glass darkly." The lower personality seeks the beyond but cannot see it; wistfully he peers into the yonder but he cannot pierce the veil of flesh. That is his loneliness; he feels that he does not belong here, yet he cannot quite find his true home.

He does not belong here, but he is not yet ready for the stage of Salvation for he is not yet quite free from the domination of the lower personality. He has become clearly defined, a definite individual distinct from other individuals and has quite transcended the lower expressions of selfishness and grossness. He has conquered "the tiger and the ape" in himself and, we may add, the pig and the serpent. Now the lower personality must be completely effaced; the mould by means of which he gained his definiteness and individuality must be cast off and broken up. The self-emphasizing self which has grown out of the true self and for ages has been so near to him, moulding him into a definite specific shape, that it has become almost and all but part of him—this must be sacrificed. He must detach himself from, and leave behind, his constant companion. Ah, the difficulty! That which at one time, long ago, was "for his wealth" has now become "an occasion of falling" and must be discarded. It is not his I. He cannot pass on till this mould has been shed.

He must know that, however clearly defined are his self and other selves, the Self of all is one: there is but one spirit; he must "know the Self as one" and he must love and serve God and man for naught but the love of serving. He must not strive for the light and for the life of freedom for his own sake but for their sake, and he must seek them not as a separate individual but only as a part of the Self of all selves. He has learned to love deeply, purely, strongly and widely, but now he must love disinterestedly as well. Without thought of self, without thought of any monopoly of the loved ones, without thought of any reward of love save in the loving, or of any return of love, but solely for love's sake, he must love and

serve and sacrifice. Nor must he think of his own salvation, though it is to that that all his lives have tended; yet when he is least thinking of it and most thinking of the salvation of others, he is in fact most effectually accomplishing it. He must lose completely the separated life of lower self, and in so doing must find and save his true life, the life of soul and of higher personality.

At or about this stage an Elder Brother takes him in hand to help him on the later stages—an Elder Brother who has Himself trodden this way of the Cross and Who therefore knows every step of the way. The Elder Brother is the Master under Whose guidance progress now is rapid. Soon, perhaps in the same life in which the Master accepts the pupil, a stage is reached which is known in Christianity as Salvation, and in evolutionary Mysticism as Initiation [1]. It is at this stage that the separated lower personality is drawn into oneness with the fuller and larger life of soul, or, rather, the life of the soul floods and fills the lower personality whilst still that lower self is incarnate on earth. When this junction has been completely effected there is no longer a higher and lower personality; there is only one personality which in turn becomes, relatively to the spirit, the lower self. In the embodied condition this junction of soul and lower personality is marked as an expansion of consciousness. This is a very definite stage in evolution finally effected at a definite ceremony of Initiation, when the disciple is out of the body during sleep. It is the "new birth" of the disciple, a birth into the higher and larger life of soul. It admits also to membership of the great company of Elder Brothers and Holy Ones which is the inner government of the world. It is salvation by anticipation, for not yet has the human stage been completely passed through nor the super-human stage completely reached. The disciple, now an Initiate and a brother of the great Brotherhood, "is justified by faith" in what he must now soon become; that is his Salvation; he is "saved by faith;" he is regarded not as he is but as he must soon be—a perfect man.

Between the stage of the first Initiation and the stage of actual achievement lie four more Initiations, the last or fifth of which is the gateway which leads out from the human into the super-human stage of evolution. But at this point we will leave the subject of the higher evolution for a time, to return to it in the next article.

[1] Initiation is not a Christian term; it is equivalent to "entry into the Kingdom of Heaven," an expression of frequent occurrence in Christian literature.

This slight and imperfect sketch of a great subject will be sufficient to reveal what are the ethical principles of that form of Liberal Catholicism which interprets Christianity in this way. It is obvious from what has been said that Liberal Catholicism of this description does not think lightly of sin. It differs from orthodoxy in not thinking hysterically or even emotionally about it, but it does not regard sin as an unimportant matter, a side issue in evolution, which can be ignored—far from it. Sin, in the opinion of Liberal Catholics, should not be thought of as though it were an alien, an intruder which has crept in unawares and spoiled God's plan; as though it in no wise belonged to the original scheme and had not been allowed for in that scheme; or as though it had so upset the Creator's calculations that a remedy, involving infinite pain to the Son of God, had to be devised by which the balance could be restored and the smooth working of the scheme of human evolution secured for the future.

It is not thus that Liberal Catholics think of sin, but they do realize very strongly that it is a state or stage of human evolution which, however necessary and inevitable, must be passed through and left behind. It is not enough that sin should be forgiven; it must be utterly forthgiven, forsaken and abandoned; men must forsake sin as serpents slough their skins and go their way without them. It is in this sense of forth-giveness that Liberal Catholics whole-heartedly accept the clause in the creed "we believe . . . . . in the forgiveness of sins." And surely that is the only reasonable explanation of forgiveness and the explanation which is held by an ever-growing number of orthodox Christians at the present time. A forgiveness which does not carry with it a deliverance from the offence itself, though not necessarily from its consequences, would surely be useless.

In ethics therefore there is very little difference between the teachings of the Liberal Catholic and the Traditional Catholic Churches. Self-renunciation, service and other-worldliness are the main principles underlying the ethical teachings of Liberals and Traditionalists alike. And, starting from different premisses, they come to the same conclusion about sin by different but equally logical processes. The conclusion is that sin must be counteracted, forgiven and totally abandoned.

But, though their ethics are the same, the two systems differ widely in their teachings of human evolution. It has already been shown how wide is this difference in the matter of the doctrine of the Atonement. It must also be very obvious that in two other particulars, assumed in this and preceding articles, there is a wide divergence of opinion.

One of these particulars is the teaching of Reincarnation without which the scheme sketched in this article would scarcely hold together. The teaching is based partly on the knowledge of not a few in the Liberal Catholic Church, as of others outside it, who know reincarnation as a fact in their own evolution and do not merely believe it as a reasonable theory. For such, that knowledge is an all-sufficient ground of acceptance; to them Reincarnation is not a theory but a fact. Others, who have reason to trust those who claim to know reincarnation as a fact, who find them trustworthy teachers of other matters that are capable of verification, have their own belief enormously strengthened by the professed knowledge of those who claim to know. But by the great majority of those who accept it, whether within or without the Liberal Catholic Church, the theory is believed because of its own inherent reasonableness. It works. It explains so much that otherwise would be inexplicable, and throws light on so many problems of religion and life that are otherwise obscure. It presents immortality in an intelligible form: it shows life as an unbroken continuity—without beginning as without end. There is so great a literature on the subject that it would be a waste of effort to attempt in this article to prove the doctrine on pragmatic or on any other lines. The question that concerns us as a definite branch of the Christian Church is not "Is it true?" for to that most members of our Church have given their consent, but "Is it Christian?"

It seems to us to be a matter not so much of theology as of philosophy, and its undoubted absence from the Christian Scriptures, except in a very few passages which are easily capable of a different interpretation, is a matter which ranks with the similar absence from the Scriptures of any substantial support of the Copernican astronomy. There is little or no evidence in the scriptures of the Copernican teaching; yet that teaching is true, and it is so far from being incompatible with the Christian revelation that, when the Bible is put in its true place and critically interpreted, it enlarges and explains that revelation.

So it is with Reincarnation. It is not found, except in doubtful hints, in the scriptures or creeds. If, as many suppose, it did form part of the original **depositum**, it dropped out or was driven out at a very early stage in the history of the Christian Church. If, as is unlikely, it was deliberately omitted by our Lord from the **depositum** we cannot tell for what reason. We might guess, as we might guess the reason for the omission of the Copernican astronomy, but guesses are useless. But though, for whatever reason, it is not found in scriptures or

creeds yet, if thought out and examined without prejudice, the teaching is found to be not only compatible with, but the very key to, the Christian revelation as evolutionists understand it.

It is in this sense of incarnating afresh in human bodies that the last clause of the creed must be understood and accepted. If not in this way how else, we may wonder, can "the resurrection of the flesh" be understood and accepted?

And the teaching is not contrary to orthodoxy. It would be hard even for a modern Cyril to show that the teaching of reincarnation is a heresy. It has never, so far as can be discovered, been anathematized by any Œcumenical Council of the Church. It is supposed by some that the second Council of Constantinople (A.D. 553), which lacked œcumenical status, rejected the teaching, but definite records of the canons of this Council are hard to come by. Except for that one doubtful Conciliar pronouncement the teaching does not seem ever to have attracted the serious attention of the doctors and rulers of the Church. Catholic Christians therefore who accept this teaching may continue to believe it without any fear that in so doing they are harbouring a heresy. If ever the Catholic Church should compel them to choose between reincarnation and the Church, which could hardly happen in the Liberal Catholic Church, they will naturally choose the truth as they see it.

The other particular in which in this connection Liberal Catholic teaching diverges widely from the teaching of orthodox Catholicism is the teaching of the Elder Brothers or Masters. Here again the grounds of acceptance of the belief in the existence of the Elder Brothers, and of Their interest in human affairs, and of the help They give to human disciples, are precisely the same as in the case of Reincarnation. Some know the Elder Brothers personally. Others, believing that such a claim is justified by the general trustworthiness and goodness of those who make it, find their own belief in the teaching enormously strengthened thereby. But the majority of those who believe in Their existence and help do so because it seems in itself to be an inherently reasonable belief and even an inevitable corollary of the truth, if it be true, of spiritual evolution. If evolution be true, it follows logically that somewhere there are super-human Beings; otherwise we are left with the almost untenable hypothesis that evolution climbs slowly and by a long ladder of stages up to the human stage and then stops, and that there is no-one in between man and God, except Christ Who is both. And if there are super-human Beings,

it is not improbable that some of Them at least are accessible to some human beings in the flesh who believe in Their existence; and that, in addition to however many other functions, some of Them have as one of Their functions the helping and teaching of Their younger and less evolved brothers. This is the teaching about the Elder Brethren which is commonly held and taught by members of the Liberal Catholic Church.

It has often been pointed out in opposition to the evolutionary teaching about the person of Our Lord—the teaching which, apart from any knowledge of or belief in reincarnation, claims that He is the highest fruitage of the human race and that others will in the course of time reach the same level—that evolution when it reaches a certain stage usually tends to perpetuate itself. There is only one Christ, the objectors say, and no other since His day has, even remotely, approached Him. The objection is a good one if borne out by the facts; and, in any case, the underlying assumption of the teaching which it opposes is, in our opinion, untrue—the assumption namely that the Christ incarnation was an incarnation such as any human incarnation might be, and not an incarnation of a special kind and for a special purpose, and without necessity except the necessity of love. But the objection is not borne out by the facts if, as we believe, the Elder Brothers really do exist. It may be true that no other historical person has reached, or has come within reasonable distance of reaching, the Christ level, but super-human evolution and the higher stages of human evolution are not passed in the public gaze. When men become super-men (and even in some cases before) they usually cease to incarnate on earth; and if for reasons of Their own They do incarnate They normally live entirely apart from all except those few whom for special reasons They call into close association with Themselves. And when one of Them comes out into the outer world on a great mission of help to the human race and becomes a historical Person, as in the case of the incarnation of the Lord Christ 2000 years ago, He usually takes the body of a disciple already in the world—a body not so highly evolved that it cannot mix in the life of the world. When an Elder Brother comes in this way it is not under any necessity such as brings us lesser beings back and back again to the incarnate condition, but only in order that in such a way He may the better help His younger brethren. In the Liberal Catholic Church, as outside it, there is at the present time a very real and widespread belief that in such a way the Lord Christ Himself will very soon "come again to judge" that is guide, the world.

But though They live apart from, and are normally unknown to, lesser human beings, the Elder Brothers do exist, and through the gates of the five great Initiations there is continually pouring a thin stream, some in every generation, of human beings on their way to the super-human stage and beyond; the way is not barred to any; on the contrary, all who will are invited to enter upon this path. After they have become super-human or Elder Brothers They still evolve and, by still higher Initiations, They pass on till They reach a degree only little below the exalted level of the Lord Christ Himself.

This is surely a very reasonable theory, and in the Liberal Catholic Church it is practically universally accepted as true. If true, it supplies the link which, in ignorance of this truth, the orthodox have rightly felt needed to be supplied by those who hold the evolutionary theory—the link between the highest and best of men known in history and the Lord.

There are no great gaps in evolution. From conversion, by gradual stages, souls pass onwards and upwards in an unending and an unbroken stream to the realization of divinity, and beyond.

This belief is not a heresy. It is simply the doctrine, included in the Christian creed, of the Communion of Saints.

CHAPTER TEN—FINALITY.

DR. GORE, a distinguished Anglican prelate and a theologian of great influence amongst a large section of Anglo-Catholics, writing in a recent book (1) in support of the orthodox Catholic doctrine of the person of Christ, says of that doctrine:—

> "Herein lies also the clue to the **FINALITY of the Christ. Intellectually considered, nothing is more essential to a full faith in Christ than this recognition of His essential finality. This means that He is not only the greatest prophet and the most conspicuous saint and the noblest leader of humanity who has ever lived: for if that were all, obviously we could "look for another" as great as He, possibly greater than He. And if Jesus be, as at the last analysis Nestorianism always asserts, a human person, one among millions of human persons, whom the divine Word united to Himself and even (finally) absorbed into Himself, there is no reason in the nature of things why the process should not be repeated. It is, in fact, only the highest example of what occurs in its measure in every good man. There may be another Christ, even conceivably a higher and more enlightened one. There is no real ground for asserting the finality of the Christ unless He be personally God in manhood. Then, and then only, must He be essentially and necessarily final. For there can be no disclosure of God in manhood or of manhood in God even conceivable which should be completer or fuller (at least under the conditions of this world) than is given us in Him who is the Word made flesh. Nor in the nature of things can there be another such. There can be no other such person as the only-begotten Son of God."**

It is a long quotation, but in a book intended to explain the Traditional teaching to Liberal Catholics and to compare the teaching of Liberal Catholics with that of Traditionalists, it seemed well to give at some length the exact words of a representative teacher of Traditionalist doctrine on this important point. Dr. Gore is certainly a representative theologian—representative especially of conservative Anglo-Catholicism and also on this point, of the theology of a far larger number of Christians than are included in the Anglo-Catholic circle.

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(1) **Belief in Christ,** pp. 214-215.

Finality is not in itself an article of the Christian Creed and need not therefore be considered as though it were a fundamental Christian teaching binding on all who "profess and call themselves" members of the Church of Christ. Nevertheless it is an important point, and interesting in itself, apart from all questions of orthodoxy and heresy.

When first confronted with the Traditionalist view so ably expressed by Dr. Gore, Catholics of the Liberal and evolutionary mystical variety will probably be struck with amazement, for it does not usually occur to them that finality is necessary or even possible. Why, they will ask themselves, should there not be another or others as great as Christ, or why should not He ever become greater than He was at the time of His Palestinian incarnation? Why should not "the process be repeated"? Why must He be "essentially final"? Did He Himself really claim to be in any sense final? Why should there be "no other such person as the only-begotten Son of God"?

The desire for finality in the case of Our Lord Christ and for a final revelation so keenly felt by Traditionalist Christians and so clearly revealed in the above quotation brings into very sharp contrast the orthodox-conservative-traditional views on the one hand and liberal-evolutionist-mystical opinions on the other. The divergence at this point is perhaps wider than at any other point; yet can neither say to the other, "we have no need of you" in the Catholic Church, for neither view is ecclesiastically heretical and each view, though the reconciliation be beyond our ken, may be complementary to the other.

The traditional Catholic teaching of the finality of Christ and of the final and unique disclosure of God in Christ is entirely dependent on the traditional idea of the Being of God. The desire for a final revelation and for the manifestation of Godhead in manhood in a final and complete Person could only exist side by side with, and as the result of, that Jewish view of God which sees Him as a static deity essentially distinct and separate from man. The divergence of view on the question of finality is therefore ultimately the same as the divergence on the doctrine of God.

It is not easy to discover what is the traditional teaching about finality in other respects. We might wish to know what is the traditional teaching about the purpose and end of the universe, the end of this world and the end of man, but it is not easy to discover the teaching because there are so many traditions; the difficulty is to select from the many traditions any single one which is common

to all schools of thought within the Christian Church as a whole or even within those parts of the Church which claim to be Catholic.

The Athanasian Creed declares that those who fail to "believe rightly" the doctrine of the Trinity and the doctrine of the Incarnation will "perish everlastingly." The Athanasian Creed, which by the way is omitted from the Liturgy of the Liberal Catholic Church, probably because of its minatory clauses, is certainly a Creed of the Catholic Church and might naturally be considered to be for that reason definitely the teaching of the whole Church. But this is not so, because its negative or minatory clauses are not regarded as part of the Creed itself but only as its setting; and, in any case, the minatory clauses are considered by many competent orthodox judges to "go beyond the warrant of scripture" in their **prima facie** meaning and so not to be universally binding on the Church. In the Church of England and in those Episcopal Churches which are in communion with the Church of England much latitude is allowed about the recitation of this Creed, the warning clauses of which are strongly objected to by many of the clergy, including a considerable number of dignitaries.

Apart from the warnings of the **Quicunque Vult** some Traditionalists teach that after death comes the Judgment, then an age-long, or everlasting, existence in either heaven or hell; others teach that a period of purgation comes between death and judgment. Some teach that the Day of Judgment will coincide with the "end of the world," others that it will mark the end of an age or dispensation, in which case the judgment will be a period of guiding and not a final discrimination between the good and the bad. Again some may still be found to teach that heaven and hell are places with definite geographical positions in relation to our earth, whilst others teach that they are conditions which can be, and often are, entered upon before death, inasmuch as being spiritual conditions they are independent of physical connections. There is, thus, such a medley of teachings that it is impossible to say that any one of them is quite definitely taught and believed by the Christian Church as a whole, but it would not be untrue to say that the Catholic Church, using the term in its broadest sense, teaches broadly a Church militant on earth, a Church expectant in purgatory or paradise, and a Church triumphant in heaven, and that these three are the same Church in different conditions; individuals are mostly free to think for themselves as to what is or what may be the nature of the purgatorial and heavenly conditions.

Of those who die "out of grace" Catholic teachers are usually silent and non-committal, except that Romans give the impression that they boldly teach, at least to the more ignorant, a doctrine which is practically identical with the mediæval hell.

It is not surprising that, on these theories, there is a great deal of anxiety amongst Christians about their future condition and, in some cases, much real suffering when it is thought that exclusion from heaven is likely to be the lot either of the people who experience the fear or of others dear to them; in some cases the absence of sufficient "assurance" of acceptance by God is the cause of intense nervousness and of life-long anxiety. Death is, on all these theories, a very solemn matter and, more often than not, its approach is viewed with dread.

Liberal Catholics on the other hand, in common with many spiritualists and scientific evolutionists, regard birth and death merely as incidents, constantly recurring, in an endless existence. To the larger life of soul birth and death are of no more significance than are waking and sleeping in the life of every embodied being. And for such, because of their joyful assurance of the predestination of all God's creatures to final bliss, the future, in spite of all the trouble and sorrow that it may have in store before that bliss is attained, has no terrors; for the troubles are but for the moment whilst the bliss, which is God, is for eternity. But to return, after so long a digression, to the question of the finality of Christ and of a final revelation.

On the evolutionary theory there is no need for a final revelation nor can there be such until the last human being of our humanity, to say nothing of succeeding humanities, has wrested the last secret of human evolution from that portion of the plan of God which concerns our human evolution. And, beyond human evolution, there can be no final revelation till the last unit of consciousness has wrested from the Absolute One the last truth about God, the universe and himself.

We shall perhaps best appreciate the vast difference of opinion on this matter of finality by clearing up for ourselves, and for others interested in our views, our own opinions about the end of things and persons. To do this we must consider the subject of finality as a whole and not merely in reference to the person of Our Lord. And for this purpose we will take up again the consideration of human evolution which was laid aside in the chapter on Conversion and After.

The theory of the evolution of free spirits, taken in conjunction with the facts of that evolution visible on all sides and always staring us in the face,

requires that sooner or later a time of crisis or Day of Judgment, when the more highly evolved human beings shall be separated from those who cannot keep pace, and, thus unencumbered, shall be able the more rapidly to press along their appointed course. The distance between first and last in the human race is enormous; it is a fact of evolution that stares us in the face; and the distance tends to be still further extended. At one end there is the genius, the saint and the highly cultured gentleman; at the other extreme there is the primitive savage. It is useless to pretend that these are equal in any other sense than that they proceed ultimately from the same source and that the same divine spirit is at the far-back of all. They are equal in their origin and they will be equal again in their far-off destination, but they are not equal in their evolution in between. The human group in running the race that is set before it straggles and the interval between leaders and laggards increases as the race proceeds. But they are all one, bound up with each other and dependent, to some extent, on each other. The leaders help the laggards, but the laggards are a drag upon, and hinder, the leaders. The time will come, a quite definite time whose approximate date is known to the inner Government of the world, when the advantages to be gained to the laggards, and so to the whole, by their connection in one group with the leaders will be deemed to be outweighed by the disadvantages to the leaders, and so to the whole, by the same connection. Then there will be a separation. Those who are not likely to reach a certain level of development by a certain required time will be suspended for an age, and will take up their evolution again at the head of a subsequent wave of human evolution—at the head of what we now know as the animal kingdom which in part will then be human. The remainder, no longer dragged back by the laggards, will evolve rapidly and will eventually pass out of human evolution by the gateways of the five Initiations.

For the laggards, there will be almost infinite delay whilst the suspension lasts, and until they are caught up and carried on by the oncoming wave of evolution; but the time of suspension will not be time wasted, for, even in that period, evolution is at work, though slowly, so that when the suspended laggards emerge from the period of age-long suspension or pruning (κόλασις), because of the force of evolution, they will be much further evolved than when they were rejected at the Day of Crisis. They will be well ahead of, though they will evolve together with, those higher animals of our evolution who will then be human persons. Except for the suspension or aeonian pruning there will be no punishment for the

failures, and the judgment or crisis will not be final. And those who succeed will not on that account cease to evolve; they will press on perhaps to other days of crisis. Thus neither for the successful nor for the unsuccessful is finality to be expected at the Day of Judgment. There is no final judgment.

For all practical and immediate purposes Salvation means success at the Day of Crisis, and the evangelizing efforts of Christians should be directed, as they usually are, towards helping as many as possible of the human race "to be saved"—that is, so to live now that they may become sufficiently evolved in the required time to be found on the right side of the dividing line at the Judgment Day. Who will be the Judge we cannot say, but we may be sure that the judgment will be unerring and exact—automatic rather than arbitrary.

On this theory the doctrines of Judgment to come and of everlasting punishment, which, literally and correctly translated, is nothing more than aeonian pruning, are not impossible superstitions but reasonable ideas and, indeed, necessities bound up with evolution.

The future of those whose progress towards predestinated glory is not delayed by any age-long suspension, lies beyond the experience of those who have not themselves as yet passed on to the higher reaches. Yet we need fix no limit to that future. In time, as we have seen, they will reach, as others have reached and are in every generation reaching, by a series of Initiations, the Elder Brother stage. But as Elder Brothers they will still evolve. Not at that stage can the end be fixed. In time again they will reach the level now held by Our Lord the Christ. But even there evolution will not end.

Though He stands so high, yet that great height must not be allowed to dazzle or dismay His followers. They too are to be as He is—"perfect as the Father in heaven is perfect." It cannot be over-emphasized or too often stated that each of the separate persons who collectively make up the human race, however many they may be, is to become in wisdom, in love and in power as the Son of God. Each is to transcend self but without loss of essential selfhood. Each is to be "as his Lord." Throughout all ages each, like his Lord, will keep his higher personality, his true selfhood. The transcending of self and the casting off of the excesses of personality, as a serpent sloughs his skin: perhaps the sloughing of many relatively lower personalities in succession does not involve and, however many skins are sloughed, never will involve the loss of essential

selfhood. If it did so, if the distinctions of selfhood could conceivably be lost, the whole vast process would have been in vain. If all the separated spirits, the fruits of the age-long sacrifice of the Son of God, were to pour back again into the undifferentiated sea of spirit, losing their distinctions, then that great sacrifice would have been to no purpose. It would indeed be a waste of effort and a waste of sacrifice if, on emerging from imprisonment in matter, the Son of God and all the myriads in Him were simply to slip back into undifferentiated spirit and be as He was before manifestation and multiplication began. But it is not so. The fruits of the great sacrifice will be myriads upon myriads of persons, from all the worlds and of all the ages, distinct yet one, in each one of whom shall dwell "all the fulness of the Godhead" as it was in the beginning, and before manifestation, in the Son of God. He sacrifices His life in order that all these may be as He is yet remain in Him; and though He pours out His life that all these may have life more and more abundantly yet never is there, nor can there be, any loss or diminution of life to Him. There shall be uncountable millions of distinct persons, in each unit of whom shall dwell all the fulness of the One.

To evolve first from self-consciousness to self-unconsciousness and from self-unconsciousness to Self-consciousness or Son-of-God-consciousness is the end and aim of human evolution. Every human being shall eventually reach God-consciousness, yet even that is not necessarily the end of evolution.

From our level, the end, if end there be, cannot be seen. But why should we look for or try to imagine finality? If the absence of finality seems to involve the difficulty of a purpose eternally frustrate, we must be content to know that the difficulty is only apparent; that the reconciliation between ever-lasting, or even eternal, evolution and final accomplishment of purpose, lies, like the solution of other logical contradictions, somewhere beyond our ken in the eternal.

Our Lord, Whom we worship as God because in Him "dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead," has not yet reached the end of evolution. There are for Him as for us still greater heights to be scaled. The Logos Himself, the Logos of the Solar System, is not yet complete; He has still to draw back into Himself that which He put forth when He set His system in motion; the beloved Son has still to yield up all the myriad sons that are in Him; and when "He shall have delivered up the Kingdom to God, even the Father" the Father must logically be more complete than He was before the Son came forth. Even when God shall

be "all in all" there may still be for Him other heights beyond that great height. So, to our feeble reasons it seems inevitable, though contradictory, that even the Absolute One is not complete and so not Absolute.

We cannot see an end nor do we understand why there should be an end; but we can see, we think, that if there be any end it is not where our orthodox brethren would place it. The Lord Christ we worship as God, and Him we seek to serve; and His disciples we would be, and to be like Him we aspire; but we do not think of Him as of one Who is "essentially and necessarily final," nor do we think that He thinks of Himself as such or wishes us so to think of Him.

At this point, sorrowfully but quite definitely, we part company with those whose "full faith in Christ" involves "the recognition of His essential finality." There is no appreciable finality in evolution. Yet we do not " 'look for another' as great as He, possibly greater than He"; rather do we look for the same Lord Christ but greater now than ever before.

CHAPTER ELEVEN—THE ULTIMATE AUTHORITY.

OUTSIDE the Roman Communion the teaching of the verbal inerrancy of Scripture has now practically disappeared from the Churches. It has never been definitely rejected nor, so far as we are aware, was it ever definitely accepted by any Ecumenical Council of the Church. A generation of clergy and ministers, trained in the principles of literary criticism, has gradually grown up whose exegesis of scripture is naturally in accordance with critical principles; consequently the theory of verbal inerrancy is rapidly dying, if it has not already died, a natural death. Twenty years ago an Anglican dignitary, speaking at a conference of clergy, declared in challenging and triumphant tones that not only did he believe that a whale swallowed Jonah because "the Bible said so" but that if it had been written in the Bible that Jonah had swallowed a whale he would have believed it unhesitatingly. And he would. Those who believed in verbal inerrancy believed in it very seriously, not to say savagely, for they regarded it as the foundation of all beliefs. Those days have now passed, but in other forms the problem still distracts the Churches.

The question now is concerned not so much with inerrancy or even with inspiration as with interpretation. Are certain narratives to be interpreted literally and regarded as historical, or is there in the Scripture narratives a mixture of allegory and history? So far as the Old Testament is concerned the controversy is practically spent. There are but few now who teach that the early narratives of the Pentateuch or even of the historical books of the Hebrew Scriptures can be interpreted otherwise than in an allegorical sense. But so far as the New Testament is concerned the controversy is by no means spent.

The present-day battle (for in certain parts of the world it can described by no other term) between Modernists and Fundamentalists is mainly a battle about the historicity or otherwise of incidents related in the gospels. The anxiety of the Fundamentalists is natural for they represent that very large body of Protestant, or at least non-Roman, Christians who base the whole structure of their faith, not on the verbal inerrancy of scripture, but on the historicity of the Gospel story and of the Acts, and on the genuineness and authenticity of the Epistles. To these Christians the historicity of the 'historical facts' of the New Testament is as important as the infallibility of the Church—that is of the Church of the papacy—is to the Roman Catholics. The ultimate authority is at stake. To the non-Roman the

Scriptures as history are the ultimate authority; to the Roman it is the Church, speaking through the **ex-cathedra** utterances of the Pope, that is the infallible voice of authority. For the Protestant Fundamentalists the position at the present time is very precarious for, under the searchlight of literary criticism, nothing in the Scriptures, whether in Old or New Testaments, is securely established as historical. Creeds, it is true, precede Scriptures in point of time; long before the Canon was drawn up, and indeed before the New Testament scriptures, as we have them, were written, there was some form of baptismal creed which was later incorporated in the conciliar creed; but creeds are only accepted as an authority inasmuch as, and in so far as, they are based on, and provable by, Scripture, and not otherwise. So that though Scriptures come later in time than the original creed, they, and not the creeds, are, in the Protestant and non-Roman Catholic Churches, the ultimate and final authority. If, on this theory, the Scriptures go, all goes. The position therefore at the present time is exceedingly precarious, not to say tragic, for the Fundamentalist Christians, and we cannot wonder that since to them the historicity of the Gospel narratives is so fundamental—so much the foundation on which the whole structure rests—they resist the Modernists so vigorously. Nor can we wonder that so many orthodox and semi-orthodox Anglo-Catholics, who likewise regard the historicity of the Gospel 'facts' as fundamental, fearing for the stability of their foundation, are hurrying Romewards where they may bury their heads in the sands of Rome and persuade themselves that, because the Church says that the Gospel 'facts' are historical and therefore that the foundations of the faith are secure, they are secure.

What has Modernism and Liberalism, always anxious for truth at all costs and never afraid of truth, to say at the present crisis? What hope can be held out to the Fundamentalist Anglicans and to the Protestant Churches? Modernism offers another foundation. It says that neither in the Scriptures, nor in the Creeds, nor in the Church must the final and ultimate authority be sought but in the reason and the spirit of truth, which is the Spirit of God, within man. Those who accept, as true or infallible guides, the Scriptures, the Creeds or the Church do so, the Modernists urge, because their reason consents that these are trustworthy guides. They may have been told that they are trustworthy; they may have been told that it would be rash or wrong not to accept them; that no one can expect to reach the truth, which is God, without a guide and that this or that guide is traditionally considered to be the best guide, or the only guide; the necessity of having an outer guide and the credibility of a particular guide, be it a literature or a

Church, may be presented in a thousand ways, but it is ultimately the reason within and the spirit of truth within that accepts. Therefore in any case reason and the spirit within man is an authority behind, and greater than, either Scriptures, or Creeds, or Church. "Therefore," say the Modernists, "have no fear. Have an outer guide if you must, and change your outer guide if you will, but always the final authority is within. Trust the inner spirit and all will be well. Let the spirit of truth lead whither it will, if it leads to truth it leads where God wills. Be content therefore to let go the 'historical facts' if and as soon as the evidence is clearly against them, and all must be well."

But the Fundamentalists resist the Modernists as dangerous and mischievous innovators. The Fundamentalists want their foundation and no other; they want the New Testament, interpreted literally, and no other foundation. Hence the controversy which, especially in America, bids fair to rend the Episcopal Church in twain.

Meantime the Mystics of all the Churches go still further back than the Modernists for their ultimate authority, and declare that behind and beyond the reason that thinks and discriminates is something else—the intuition or pure spirit that sees and knows. They need no outer authority when they can get their religion at first hand. The Mystic who has certitude is necessarily quite unmoved by any question of the literal truth or otherwise of scripture narratives, and is indifferent as to whether or no the Church of the Papacy declares such and such a doctrine to be true. The devotional Mystic is in a happy position; the waves and storms of controversy pass over him and leave him untouched and unmoved; but his knowledge, though true, is useless as an authority to any but himself and those who can believe that he knows.

Liberal Catholics of the Liberal Catholic Church, as has been shown, base their theological structure neither on historical facts recorded in Scriptures nor on doctrines declared to be true by an infallible Church, but on certain age-long spiritual processes, the teaching of which, they claim, is concealed within both scriptures and creeds. They are consequently undisturbed by, and but little interested in, the controversies that in so many parts of the Christian Church now rage around the 'historic facts' of the gospels and the creeds. They suggest to their brethren in other Churches, who are greatly disturbed by the present controversy, that the spiritual basis of the Christian faith is more secure than any facts however historical, but they cannot and would not attempt to force their beliefs upon their brethren who are unable or unwilling to accept them. They

think of scriptures, whether Hebrew or Christian, as useful aids to the life of devotion and, in some cases, as interesting documents. But they are very unequal both in interest and in inspiration and their authenticity is so uncertain that no doctrine either of belief or conduct can safely be based on them or deduced from them alone. If on other grounds there is good reason to accept a proposition of belief as true, or a line of conduct as good, and this is supported by Scripture, well and good; there is all the stronger reason then for accepting the proposition or for encouraging the line of conduct; but no teaching can be accepted on the sole authority of the written word even though the word is attributed to the Lord Christ Himself. The narratives are so confused that Scriptural support for any teaching, if it is the sole support, is valueless.

It is difficult too for Liberals of this school to see any consistency in that attitude towards the 'historic facts' of the creeds and gospels, which claims the liberty to interpret certain articles of the creed in a spiritual or mystical sense, but insists on a literal and historical interpretation of such of the articles as are concerned with matters which come within the experience of human beings in the embodied condition. In the first place it is difficult to see that any of the 'facts' mentioned in the Creed are of a sort that come normally within our experience. A virgin birth and a physical resurrection, one would have thought, are not matters of normal human experience; why then are they to be believed in a literal, but the ascension into heaven and the session at the right hand of God in a spiritual, sense? As human experiences all these are equally abnormal and unusual. But, in any case, the principle of interpretation must surely be the same throughout. It is simply arbitrary to say that certain articles may be interpreted in one way but that others must be interpreted in another; and to say that the dividing line must be drawn where purely spiritual experiences cease and normal human experiences begin, wherever that may be, is an assumption of authority intolerable because unwarranted. Such an argument, advanced mainly by semi-orthodox Catholics, is not likely to hold for very long against the weight and the force of critical research.

No, the position of this semi-orthodox school—of those who allow a mystical or allegorical interpretation of the Old Testament but insist on a literal or historical interpretation of the New—is impossible. The 'facts' may have actually happened; there is no proof that they did not, but until there is proof that they did, and even then, the mystical interpretation of the whole gospel story must be allowed; there cannot be different principles of interpretation for different portions of the scrip-

tures. The claim that any portion of the Scriptures **must** be literally interpreted was forfeited when the historical interpretation of the Old Testament narratives had to be abandoned, and it can never again be recovered. So far, however, as the Liberal Catholic Church is concerned few of its members, as has been shown, are particularly interested in the question of the historicity of the Gospel 'facts.' What is essential in these 'facts' is not that they represent physical happenings but that they reveal age-long super-physical processes of evolution.

In the matter of authority and infallibility, as in so many other matters, the Liberal Catholic Church has a constructive contribution to offer. Many, perhaps most, in that Church do most profoundly believe that there is an infallible outer authority, but it is hard to find and is not in normal circumstances revealed to all but only to some who are very eager to know and very anxious to learn. The doctrine of Infallibility is true. It contains a great truth but its truth is other and greater than the doctrine that is proclaimed by the Roman Church. Somewhere in the universe there is an infallible, that is a true, teaching. It is the plan of the Great Architect of the Universe. And somewhere in the Universe are infallible Teachers who know all that in the plan concerns us men and our evolution for ages still to come. Whenever infallible pupils are forthcoming fragments of the infallible teaching are given to them by the infallible Teachers. To be infallible in this sense means that the pupils must be eager to know, anxious to learn, and able to understand, but not too intellectual to be humble; they must be capable of understanding and incapable of distorting or misrepresenting. To such as these, in proportion as they are able to understand it, the infallible teaching is given by degrees. When the pupils are ready the Teachers are there.

This is an external authority, yet, in a very true sense, the teaching, the Teacher and the taught are all one. It is only that principle in the pupil which is akin to and one with the teaching that can apprehend the teaching; and it is only because of His oneness both with the teaching and with the spirit of truth in the pupil that the Teacher is able to impart the teaching to the pupil. That is the mystery of authority in matters of belief and conduct. That which is without is as that which is within.

In the earlier stages of evolution human beings need some external authority to guide them and to train the inner spirit. But the outer authority is needed only until that in themselves which is eternal has grown to such an extent that it is itself able to grasp eternal truth. The external authority is only for a time and even in that time, whether it be a literature, a society or a person, the authority is only

accepted as such by the pupil himself using his own best judgment. The pupil lays hold of the teaching and becomes one with it and accepts the authority which brings him to it. The teaching is not in the first place accepted because the authority proclaims it to be true; it is rather that the authority is accepted as such because of the teaching that is given; but when once the authority has been accepted, its, or his, teaching is accepted unhesitatingly and unquestioningly.

The really infallible Teacher is one who really knows, not a Pope. A Pope is only infallible as a Pope and in **ex cathedra** utterances. An infallible Teacher is infallible in Himself and in all His statements. The real seekers after truth need to be more sure of their teacher than they can be of an "infallible" Pope, for an "infallible" Pope may be wrong. Even though in his official utterances he is guided by the Divine Spirit, he is still a fallible instrument and in its passage through his mind and lips or pen the divine message, if there be a divine message, may be distorted and disarranged. A really infallible Teacher cannot be mistaken in those matters which He is willing to explain to human pupils, nor can the teaching be distorted or disarranged in the process.

Those who are wise seek such a Teacher, and those who seek eagerly will in time find. Many in the Liberal Catholic Church believe that there are such Teachers, and some have actually found Them. Those who desire to find Them must seek for themselves. The Church can point the way and may help the pupils to reach the Teachers, but it cannot bring the Teachers to the pupils. They, and only They, can decide when the pupil is ready to be taught.

It is also true, we believe, that the Lord Himself, Who was the Founder and is now, as always, the Guide of the Christian Church, is accessible at times to those whom He calls. His mind on important points can be ascertained by such of His followers as He calls into this close and sacred association with Himself. On such points His mind and His word are, of course, final and all-sufficient to those to whom it is revealed and to such others as can believe that these communications do occur now in the twentieth, as, long ago, in the first century. It was under such guidance and direction, we believe, that the Liberal Catholic Church came into existence as a distinct part of His Church; a branch of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, destined, we dare to hope, if by keeping in close touch with Him we and our successors may guide it wisely, to receive within its fold in years to come the main stream of His followers of the Christian fold.

CHAPTER TWELVE—THE OUTLOOK.

IS Christianity a failure?—is a question constantly recurring at the Conferences of the various Churches, in books and periodicals which cater for the religiously-minded public, and in the conversation of individuals one with another. Never has the question been asked with deeper searchings of spirit than since the Christian nations of Europe disturbed the peace of the world by plunging into the bloodiest war that has ever been fought in historical times.

Let us attempt, as so many others have attempted, to answer the question fairly and without prejudice.

One answer that has been given to the question is that Christianity cannot be said to have failed since it has never yet been tried. At first that sounds like a flippant argument which could very easily be countered by the retort that that which has not been tried after 2000 years must be regarded as a failure. But on closer examination a deep truth can be detected within the argument. It is impossible to judge whether or no a religion is a failure until and unless we know how much of it the Founder intended to be worked out in a given time. The life of the "kingdom" as taught in the Sermon on the Mount has not become, on any considerable scale, the life of this world, nor has it been tried by any large body of people such as a nation. That part of Christianity has not been worked out yet nor even attempted, and until it has been attempted and proved to be a failure or until it can be proved that the Founder intended that part of the religion to be in full working order by the middle of the 20th century, it cannot be said that Christianity is a failure. On the other hand there is so much evidence of the life of the "kingdom," when tried on a small scale and between individuals, proving a success that to that extent it may justly be claimed that Christianity is a brilliant success. The question is really one that cannot be answered because we do not know how much of the Christian religion ought to have been worked out by now.

There is, though, an important point in this consideration which is often overlooked. It is that the very fact that so many now can see the striking incongruity between the life of the "kingdom of God" as disclosed in the Sermon on the Mount and things as they are, is, in itself, a proof that the spirit of Christ, which is Christianity, is very much at work in the world now, and therefore, whether or no more ought to have been accomplished than has been accomplished, certainly something is being accomplished at the present time and Christianity is at

least ceasing to be a failure, if it has hitherto been a failure. That is a point that the despairing should consider. The ideal is now recognized as practical politics by an increasing number of practical idealists. Hitherto the Sermon on the Mount ideal has never been taken seriously; it has been taken as a possible ideal for certain individuals but not for nations or even for firms. The change of outlook on this question, as revealed for instance in the really Christian effort to establish a League of Nations, is an indication of the way the wind is blowing and should encourage all to be optimistic.

It should also be remembered that the task that Christianity had before it, and still has before it, was and is stupendous. That it has effected so much as it has in the face of, and in spite of, the tremendous difficulties in the way, is a proof of its divine origin and a sufficient reply to the pessimistic cry that it has been a failure.

What was its task? Briefly, and in the main, it was to keep the spiritual flame burning in ages and in a civilization which necessarily made for the eclipse of that spiritual flame. The days of its infancy were the dying days of the old Græco-Roman civilization; then followed the dark ages, and lastly the industrial age. Could any conditions have been more difficult? Anything that was gained in the early ages was lost in the dark ages in which there could be no progressive activity. And after the revival of learning, and all through the industrial age, it has been the lower or concrete mind that has been, in the main, in activity and in the process of development. The civilization which we see around us now, such as it is, is almost wholly the product of the concrete mind applied to matter, and is the result of the control of material forces by the scientific mind. There is, by general consent, no such "slayer of the real" as the mind and, especially, the concrete mind. The mind obscures reality and **ipso facto** emphasises the illusion of separateness to an alarming degree. In view of this, therefore, what is astonishing is not that Christianity has effected so little of its purpose but that in conditions so difficult it has acomplished so much. All through those ages, dark, middle, and industrial, the light which is within Christianity has always burned though, at times, very dimly. The religion of Christianity has often been fearfully distorted, so much so that those who love Christianity must in these days blush for shame when they consider those distortions; yet it has survived, and all the time it has, through its saints and its finest flowers, exercised a softening, humanizing, spiritualizing influence in ages which were essentially and necessarily hardening and materializing.

But what of the future? The force of evolution is now carrying us on to the next stage, to an age of philosophical and intuitional activity and the devolopment of the higher or abstract mind and to the consciousness of oneness. The tendency is all in that direction, and if that is a true forecast we may look for a much ampler fruitage in the future. If, when all the conditions made for separateness and spiritual blindness, Christianity has kept men from falling irrecoverably apart and from becoming totally blind to spiritual realities, what may we not expect it to accomplish when all the conditions shall make for oneness and the higher vision? The outlook is indeed hopeful. But where are to be found the Churches which will see the light and disclose it to the people? Let us examine some of the historic Churches frankly, yet fairly and charitably.

The Orthodox Eastern Church is very Catholic and very sacramental. It is little known in Western Europe or amongst the European peoples outside Europe. It presents the Catholic religion to Eastern Europeans in a way that is most suitable to them; it must be remembered, however, that the Russians and Greeks are not expanding races nor do they take the lead in any form of civilization. They are laggard rather than progressive peoples and consequently their influence in the future is not likely to be weighty nor is there any reason to suppose that their form of Christianity is ever likely to overflow into other parts of the world. The Eastern Church, therefore, may be expected to keep the flame burning in Eastern Europe, but cannot be expected to take any considerable part in handing on the flame to the nations of the future now in the making.

The Roman Catholic Church or, as they prefer to call themselves, the Catholic Church has an enormous influence over white people all the world over, especially over those of Latin extraction. We need not now consider all those distortions of the Faith and all the cruelties with which its name has been blackened in the past, nor all the ills which itself has suffered; those are now things of the past. We can, however, and we must consider those points which seem to us to disqualify it from being a world-religion in the future. More consistently than any other western branch of the Church it has presented the sacramental idea to the world. On that point there has been no division into High and Low. It has the light; it understands the essence of Christianity, which is, so all Catholics believe, a sacramental relationship between the Lord and mankind. There are no divisions in the Roman Church on this point; sacramentalism is the universal teaching and has been, without any interruption at any Reformation, from the beginning. Its main defect is that

it tends to guard and protect the light too jealously; it tends to hide the light behind unpassable and impossible barriers instead of throwing it out far and wide so that all may see it and live by it. The light within it is so brilliant that the Church has become dazzled; it has come to think of itself as the light instead of as a medium for the light; consequently instead of flashing the light it shuts it in within itself. It made its most fatal mistake in the year 1870 when the Vatican Council proclaimed the doctrine of Papal Infallibility. To the Roman Church, since 1870, the Papacy has been not merely a matter of organization and of government, it is of the very essence of the Church. Anglicans rarely see this point and so they miss the significance of the papal supremacy. They do not take it seriously and do not seem to realise that the Romans take it very seriously. All approaches from the Anglican side towards reunion are unavailing, for reunion with the Church of Rome is impossible except in terms dictated by Rome, which would involve acceptance of the doctrine of infallibility as Rome understands it and submission to the Pope. To the Romans the papacy is not merely a matter of the **bene esse** but it is of the very **esse** of the Church. It is as fundamental as Creeds and Orders and Sacraments. The Church of Christ is, on this teaching, the Church of the Papacy and no other. Thus the great Roman Church has shut itself off from the world and shut in its spiritual treasures within its own borders. It is useless now to any except those who can accept its extraordinary claim. The Vatican decree of 1870 was its own death-warrant, for a Church which so shuts itself in is useless as a world-religion, and, being useless, must sooner or later cease to exist.

It is a thoroughly Latin Church. It breathes the spirit of imperial Rome. Now the spirit of imperial Rome was good and useful in the days of imperial Rome, but these are not the days of imperial Rome and the spirit of the new world is quite certainly not the spirit of imperial Rome. The Church of the Papacy therefore is, so it would seem, a disappearing Church though it may be very long before it finally disappears. It will last as long as the Latin races last, but it is doubtful if it will last longer. However long it may last it may be safely trusted to keep the flame alight and to feed with the true spiritual food of Christ such people as are not made to stumble by its very Latin claim to infallibility. It is not likely that it will ever grip the Anglo-Saxon races and the races descended from them, because it has never understood, or pretended to understand, or professed or tried to understand freedom. Freedom is the thing which, of all things, it most abhors; consequently it never has and never can grip those people to whom freedom is as

the breath of life. Therefore since the Anglo-Saxon races, and not the Latin races, seem to be the most expanding races and to be taking the lead in preparing the way for the civilization of the future, it would hardly seem likely that the Roman Church, in spite of all the spiritual treasures with which it is so richly endowed, will be the Church to shower those treasures on the world that is to be.

The Church of England and other Episcopal Churches in communion with it, both in the United States and in the British Overseas Dominions may be considered together, for whether in Great Britain or in America or in the Dominions its essential features are the same. Its most striking characteristic (whether a strength or a weakness is doubtful) is its amazing comprehensiveness; and its strong points are its versatility, its adaptability and, especially in England, its dignity. In England it is a very national Church. It is thoroughly English—very dignified and very confused; it wears that air of superiority which sits so easily on the best English people and becomes them so well and makes them both honoured and hated outside their own land. The Church of England has retained the Apostolical Succession and, **ipso facto,** valid sacraments; unfortunately, however, this essential mark of Catholicism is recognized and valued by only a minority of its members. It is thus a hybrid Church, Catholic in essence but embracing a vast number of people who are avowedly Protestant in spirit. It consists of many parties of which four stand out conspicuously. The Anglo-Catholic party is thoroughly Catholic in every respect and, usually, thoroughly orthodox; if it were not so orthodox it might be of more use as a light-bringer to the world; it differs from Rome only on the question of infallibility and the papal supremacy. The High Church party is perhaps the most representative party because the most English and the most dignified. It teaches Catholic sacramentalism but is not so particular about ritual exactness and ceremonial minutiæ as the Anglo-Catholics. It is to be seen at its best in Cathedral Churches and in many Collegiate chapels. The Broad Church party tends to be modernist and is anti-Catholic in those points in which Catholicism seems to them to be synonymous with mediævalism. The Low Church party is always anti-Catholic and, except for a small but very effectual group of evangelicals, generally unprogressive. This the definitely protestant party.

The English people are not on the whole, and are not likely to become, Catholic; partly because they are not by nature mystical or even religious, and partly because Catholicism is commonly and inseparably associated in the English mind with Romanism and the Papal supremacy, which the English people detest,

They are more practical than mystical, and their function in the world is to rule, to organize and to be dignified, rather than to be religious in the ordinary sense of the word. They are, nevertheless, a world-influence and inasmuch as their practical work of government and organization is essential to human evolution, and inasmuch as dignity is a divine quality, they are to that extent religious. The Church of England is too national to become, so long as it remains so national and continues to be torn asunder by its many parties, a world-religion except in the sense in that it is the religion of a nation that is a world-power. It has, however, in the past shown itself to be so versatile and so adaptable that it may in the future shake itself free from its handicapping fetters and become an important medium for the distribution of the light of Christian truth to its own descendants and throughout the new world. Its future is an enigma.

The Old Catholic Church is an amalgam of a Dutch branch of the Catholic Church, commonly called Jansenist, and a group of distinguished Catholics in Central Europe who refused to accept the Papal doctrine of infallibility in 1870. They have retained the Apostolical Succession and so are a valid part of the Catholic Church. Their Orders are recognized as valid by high authorities in the Roman Church. It is from this body that the Liberal Catholic Church is immediately descended. It is not unlikely that in the coming decades quite a crop of new Catholic Churches may spring up all tracing their descent from the Old Catholic Church and all seeking in some measure to spread abroad that which Rome in 1870 tried to shut up within its own limits. Of the future of these Churches which have sprung from Rome since 1870 it is not yet safe to speak. The Old Catholics continue to work in Holland and in Central Europe but show no signs of spreading beyond Europe. The Liberal Catholic Church is young and, though not yet ten years old, has been seriously but wrongfully defamed. It shows many signs of becoming in the future both in the old world and in the new, an influential medium for the distribution of the light; for it is not only very Catholic and very liberal, but it has also, during the time that it has been under persecution, extended into four continents and so organized itself as to be capable of rapid expansion.

The non-episcopal Churches will probably for long continue to minister to the special types of people who at present form their congregations. Frankly, their theological background is a little too old-fashioned to warrant any hope that they are at all likely to expand very far into the new world. But, though their theology

is antiquated and their religious outlook far removed from the Catholic point of view, they are usually very, very good people and their influence for good, amongst a peculiar type of people, is incalculable.

For what especially does the Liberal Catholic Church stand? This was the question from which these theological sketches started and which the subsequent articles have attempted to answer. We are now in a position to sum up the answer.

The teaching of the Liberal Catholic Church which, let it never be forgotten, is not a set of dogmas binding on all its members but a body of teaching substantially accepted by a majority of its members, is not new. All that we believe about God, about man, about sin, atonement and salvation has been taught by many teachers in the past and is now believed by many peoples in the world outside the Liberal Catholic Church. The doctrine of Pan-entheism is universally taught and believed in India; the doctrine of re-incarnation is one of the oldest and best supported doctrines in the world; the array of teachers who have in the past supported it, and who still teach it, is, both in quantity and in quality, very formidable. The teaching about the Elder Brothers is likewise a very familiar teaching in India and belief in Their existence is spreading very rapidly in the West. There is then nothing new in these distinctive Liberal Catholic teachings, but as interpretations of the Christian religion they are certainly very new. The Liberal Catholic Church, so far as it accepts these distinctive teachings, seeks to rescue the Christian religion from its alliance with, not to say its complete subjection to, the God of Israel, and to release Catholicism from its close and intricate connection with the Holy Scriptures, both Hebrew and Christian. The religion, which Christ founded and still guides, must be free from such entanglements if its fair beauty is to be seen in all its splendour by the present and succeeding generations of seekers after truth.

It is this attempt, of whose ultimate success we are confident, to free the Catholic religion from its traditional fetters that constitutes the special and distinguishing characteristic of the Liberal Catholic Church.

And the Liberal Catholic Church alone of the Catholic Churches offers the great spiritual treasures of the Catholic Church, the sacramental grace which proceeds from Christ Himself and which is His special gift to the world through the Catholic Church, to the whole world and to all people irrespective of creed. In doing this it does not sacrifice any of the traditional warmth of colour and ceremonial so distinctive of the Catholic religion, but is careful to present Christ's gifts to the people in all the richness of their traditional Catholic setting. But it

abolishes the conditions. It does not make acceptance of a particular Creed, or baptism and confirmation, or fasting communion, confession and absolution, still less acceptance of the papal claim of the Roman Church, conditions of acceptance, because it has no authority from Our Lord for shutting in His sacraments behind such barriers, and it does not think it is His wish that they should be so shut in. His gifts are not to the Church but to the world through the Church. In His name, therefore, it offers His sacraments to all who will receive them seriously and reverently; yet it seeks no proselytes either from other Christian Churches or from the great non-Christian religions of the East.

In the Report of the (Anglican) Archbishops' Committee on Evangelistic work, issued in connection with, and as a result of, the great Conference of Anglican bishops held at London in 1920, we read that "If the Church is to preach to this generation an evangel which will grip, it must come in some real sense as news; news powerful enough to change the whole mental and spiritual outlook." That is a true saying. The world looks for something that will come as news, for some new thing that will grip, for "some better thing" that will change the outlook, and for some fuller teaching than is given to-day by any of the historic Churches of Christendom. The world has grown, and seeks, and is ready for, a further unfoldment of the **depositum** of truth. But where, we may wonder, outside the Liberal Catholic Church, is there to be found a teaching which is both ancient and Catholic and will nevertheless come as news, and will grip. We do not know.

We offer to the world a teaching which we believe is the true interpretation of the Christian Creed—Pan-entheism, Evolution through a series of rebirths, the Elder Brothers. We do not claim any monopoly in this teaching for we have not invented it; but, as Christian teaching, we are sure it is news; we believe it is true; and we wait for it to grip.

✠ F. W. PIGOTT.

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